

# ROSALYNDE'S LOVERS

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# Rosalynde's Lovers



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# Rosalynde's Lovers



## Chapter One

Upon a broad highway, straight and smooth, between ample farms, where the cheerful activities of spring sent forth a medley of noises very pleasant to hear, a young man rode his bicycle with leisurely strokes. The small case of alligator leather on the handle-bar looked a trifle worn, as if it had felt hard usage, the rain, sun, and dust of a long journey. From New York City to the mid-region of Indiana is not, indeed, a short wheel-spin; moreover, the weather had been showery almost the whole of the way, making the roads

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heavy. Now, however, a perfect morning late in April was hanging a splendid sheen of beauty on sky and landscape.

Frederick Breyten, the rider, despite his many days of steady exercise, looked fresh and cheerful. He was a man of greater weight than long-distance traveling awheel usually attracts; yet his limbs showed boyish suppleness, while his slightly curved back rippled with a fine play of muscles. Steering with one hand, the other thrust into the pocket of his short coat, he gazed right and left over the greening fields. There was a ruddy underglow in his cheeks, his curly, short hair shot a glint of gold from under the rim of his cap, and his face had a Norwegian suggestion in its fairness, strengthened somewhat by a peculiar yet not uncomely forward thrust of his rather heavy chin, which bore a rimpled yellow

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beard, short, fine, and not very thick, running thence up to his ears; and his mustaches but half veiled his mouth.

He had come out of Indianapolis by the Hawford Road at sunrise; now the city lay ten miles behind him. There was every temptation to fast riding. Straight away, hard as packed gravel could make it, the road reached, white, smooth, level, without dust, a glimmering, narrowing line to where it pitched gently down from a slight, hazy ridge-top into a wooded valley. But Breyten, albeit not averse now and again to a wild scorch, lagged while his gray eyes fed upon what the landscape had to offer.

The morning passed. He looked at his watch; it was a quarter past one. The air had a thrill of heat in it, a premature touch of summer. By the wayside, on the slope of a grassy hill



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near a noisy little brook, a spring trickled forth with a chill suggestion in its crystal current. Here he dismounted and ate his simple luncheon, drawn from a corner of the alligator-skin case, where it had been closely associated with two or three little dog-eared books. The meal ended, he stretched himself on the blue-grass under a greening willow. Five minutes later he was sleeping, with an arm curved above his head.

About five o'clock Breyten resumed his journey towards Hawford, going briskly, with a blue violet between his lips: The air, drawing from the southwest, had suddenly touched his face with a dampness meaning rain not far off; and he saw a bluish-black cloud spreading upward under the westering sun.





## Chapter Two

'April showers had so often sprinkled Breyten's back lately that the prospect of another chill dash did not give him uneasiness, nor was there anything especially threatening in the keen spears of flame shot down now and again from the cloud with rattling thunder.

When the cloud, now tumbling along with a motion like the undertow of a dangerous surf, had risen about half way to the zenith, Breyten saw a girl on a bicycle whirl with a short swift curve out of a road tributary to his, a hundred yards

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ahead. She flew straight away from him, a beaming embodiment of haste, something birdlike in her motions and in the flashes of color from her clothes suggesting the wing-movements of a frightened oriole.

Breyten involuntarily quickened his pace as she began to draw away from him. He found that she was going, indeed, at a racing gait, and against a rising wind, while her fluttering skirts, somehow showing her well-turned ankles and little feet, gave forth a twinkle of yellow and brown. The cap she wore had a black-and-orange feather-tuft lying flat at the left side with demure effect; not that Breyten could make out just its form and color, but a sense of these came along with the memory of how softly turned, and how like a berry in its rich under-glow, her cheek had looked when she

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rounded into the road. He smiled so much that he let fall the blue violet from his lips.

Jerky whiffs of wind smote harder and faster in the rider's glowing face; the girl's skirts flickered through puffs of road-dust, and by some indirect ray of expression from that exquisitely poised form slipping away before him, Breyten knew that the girl was frightened; he could almost see her shrink when the thunder drummed on the hollow floor of heaven.

He now bent low over his handle-bar, arching his back high, stretching forth his 'Antinous neck, and driving the pedals so rapidly that the tires purred, spinning the pebbles to right and left. At this moment the puffs all combined into a head-wind, a gale almost like a hurricane driving the level stream of dust into Breyten's

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eyes, and then the front wheel hit a boulder as large as his head. It seemed to him that he sailed a long way before he struck the ground; he had many thoughts while spread out bat-like in the gloomy, raging air, and his flight ended in a shock amid a great spangle of starry coruscations. His bicycle climbed along his back to his shoulders, where it settled stiffly upon him, as if conscious of having the right to caress him.

The surprise was about all there was in the mishap to disturb Breyten's faun-like equanimity; but he groveled ludicrously in the dust for awhile, uttering certain virile exclamations.

After ten minutes of toilsome headway Breyten found himself in a little valley through which a stream, half brook, half river, ran crookedly, but in a general direction at right angles with his road. A



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wooden bridge spanned the water. Here he paused, breathing as much dust as air. A roaring came out of the southwest, as if some great, hoarse throat were gasping strenuously:

Breyten shrugged his shoulders; then, lifting his bicycle, he made a dash down the stream's bank and went under the bridge, where he groped around for the most eligible place in which he might shelter himself from the shower of tree-boughs, falling noisily. It was almost pitch dark in the hollow of the crib-work wooden abutment, a stuffy nook, just above the water level, with great oaken sills half sunk in the mud, while overhead the floor of the bridge served as roof.

Hastily disposing of his bicycle, Breyten felt with his hands for a spot to sit upon. While he fumbled thus there came a blinding white flash down from heaven

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to earth with a crash, as if all things had been ground instantly together into splinters.

"Oh-o-o!" wailed a tremulous, sweet voice; and at the same time Breyten's hands clutched something soft and warm. "Let go! Oh-o-o! Oh-o-o!" continued the voice.

By the fierce light, which seemed to linger with a wavering, filmy intensity, like the sun itself, Breyten saw a girl, and recognized her as the one who had fled before him. She was sitting, half kneeling, upon the ground, her face like a saint's at prayer. Her bicycle lay beside her; so much he saw in a twinkling, and the vision registered itself within him, a luminous and fadeless picture.

He had withdrawn his hand from her soft shoulder; but when the darkness followed the flash, doubly black by contrast,

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and he heard her wail piteously, he felt around, trying to touch her again.

"Don't be frightened," he said very gently; "it is safe here. And don't you be afraid of me. I—"

He was interrupted by another flash of indescribable splendor and a detonation that made the ground oscillate. Something forced him to his knees, but he sprang up instantly; for a moment he thought the bolt had hit him on the head, while around him in a quivering clasp he felt the girl's arms. It was a frantic embrace, made strenuous by terror. Certain cries, quite unrestrained yet neither loud nor harsh, and altogether feminine, told how poignant was the agony engendering them.

Breyten stood still, smiling in the dark, half conscious of a fear that even his breathing might break the charm woven

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around him. A fine thrill sprang through his limbs and body from those quivering arms. It was but a minute—how long and delicious!—then she let go and sprang away, rising lightly to her feet.

“I—I beg pardon!” she stammered, with the intonation of a hermit thrush. “Forgive me.”

Breyten laughed.

“What for?” he demanded. “You have done no crime that I know of. You haven’t picked my pocket.”

Heavy silence ensued, so far as any sounds between them might be reckoned against it, and, in fact, the wind was slacking, the thunder receding. Not a drop of rain had fallen. Incredibly soon there was nothing in the heaven overhead but trailing shreds of dark gray, the tatters of that cloud which half an hour

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before had looked so heavy and so charged with danger.

By the sudden access of light Breyten saw the girl too plainly for the good of his eyes; he was dazzled by the beam from her fresh and glowing countenance.

"I was dreadfully frightened," she said; "I always am when it lightens and thunders so. It is foolish, I know; but—"

"It was enough to scare you," Breyten interrupted, "or any person. It's all over now. It has blown around north of here. Let me take your wheel up to the road for you."

"No, no, thank you; don't, please." But he seemed not to hear her, and went forth carrying her bicycle up the steep bank to the bridge-top, while she followed. It was done so easily and quickly that the tall, comely girl scarcely under-



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stood how she had been mastered ; but she struggled with her wits what time she was mounting the slope.

“Now wait till I fetch my wheel,” he said.

She clutched the handle-bar of her bicycle and suddenly looked up into his face.

“Oh, if you please—won’t you look for a little red note-book down there? I must have left it on the ground where we—where I—”

“Yes, yes,” said Breyten; “all right, I’ll find it.”

With three or four bounds he descended and passed under the bridge. Something like a fairy tune was humming in his ears; his eyes were so blurred with a rosy vision that he stumbled over his faithful wheel. He looked about for the little red book, until at last he found it,

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and beside it a dainty handkerchief from which, when he picked it up, a hint of heliotrope reached his nostrils.

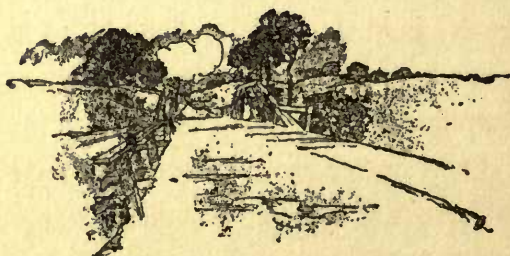
Breyten reascended the bluff in such a state of inward transfiguration that when he again stood on the bridge and looked around he felt as if just coming out of a dream. Had he really seen a lovely young woman, brown-haired, brown-eyed, berry-lipped? What had become of her? Up the road, down the road he turned his dazed, inquiring eyes; but not even a ribbon-flutter or the twinkle of a wheel broke the dancing play of sunlight now slanting over from the rapidly clearing west.

He looked curiously at the red notebook and the white handkerchief, a smile on his mouth somehow betraying his sense of having been outgeneraled. If a stalwart man ever looked like an

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abashed and bewildered boy, it was he, standing there flushed to the ear-tips, stupidly toying with what was left of the sweetest apparition that his eyes had ever seen.

It was a month in his imagination, but only a minute or two in fact, that he stood idle; then the impulse came to mount and pursue. She was going towards Hawford when he first saw her; of course, she would be going in that direction now.





### Chapter Three

Breyten entered the town from the east in a broad, clean boulevard, not pretentiously kept, but certainly attractive, on either side overlooked by pleasant homes in the midst of trees, under which a blue-grass sward shone intensely green. The way turned at a considerable angle to join a straight, broad street of the town.

Quite unlike most little cities of the middle west, Hawford had an air of age and permanence; not so much in the materials of the buildings, mostly wooden, as in the general effect made by solid

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architecture and ample grounds shaded by ancient forest trees. Breyten saw no great stir as of pressing traffic; people were going to and fro, but not with anxiety or eagerness.

After inquiry he found his way to a pleasant little hotel in the thick of the town, where his luggage was awaiting him, as well as a package of letters. The first thing was a bath; his correspondents could hold their breath until he got into comfortable clothes; for no particular interest attached to what the mails brought him. No father, mother, brother, or sister came within his memory, nor had he any familiar friends or nagging enemies who knew where he was. The letters were from agents managing his estates in different cities.

What most occupied his mind, vaguely perhaps, but in its every nook, was the girl



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who had escaped so easily at the bridge. She had fastened herself upon his imagination like a butterfly on a flower, swinging across his inner vision, as if tossed by a fresh wind.

It would be safe to say that Breyten had been touched by more than one girl's beauty before this. He was a Southerner, with all the warmth of the cavaliers in his blood.

It was a part of his deepest nature to desire, as the Greek poets expressed it, when loveliness came before him; but he had escaped sensuality by reason of high health and a native honesty. As a roving student he had, as it were, gone up and down in the world with a book in his hand and love in his heart.

While he was waiting for the dinner he had ordered, Breyten walked back and forth in his room. A bay-window looked

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into the street in front, its open sash letting enter some clatter of vehicles along with a pleasant country freshness. It was growing dark, yet against the sky pinkish clouds were sliding, thin and wavering, like fading flames pursuing the sun. The wind had gone into the southeast. Breyten took note of these weather-signs, for to-morrow he meant to go out and find his girl. His girl? Of course, his girl. It is the way that youth has of appropriating maidenhood; what a young man discovers, is it not his? Yea, to keep forever or to toss aside, according to his mind.

Later in the evening, while rummaging for something in the pockets of his cast-off bicycle coat, he found the book and handkerchief left in his possession by the fair strategist at the bridge. It would have been good to see him treat the bit

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of hemstitched linen as if its perfume were a charm, as if it were a white flower-petal from an enchanted garden. He held it near his nostrils to sniff it delicately. Then he opened the little red book.

You could have seen guilty conscience in his boyish expression of furtiveness while he read her name on the first page,—Rosalynde Banderet,—certainly musical, suggesting French ancestry. Vincennes was not far away, he remembered; besides, she had a creole dash of tender duskiness in her eyes. A warm glow pursued his blood around the circle of his veins at the thought of her voice.

Breyten felt the temptation to read the entries in the book from page to page; it was like seeing ripe berries in a cool place at high noon; they assaulted a primitive appetite. But he could not trespass farther than to catch up the name involun-

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tarily,—Rosalynde Banderet,—deliciously sweet, as if stolen.

And that night he dreamed, awake and asleep, the preposterous dreams of youth and poetry, with the book and handkerchief under his pillow.

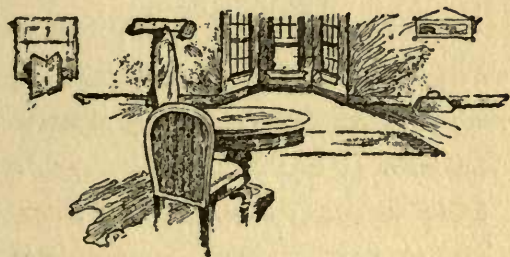
He did not rise early, as was his habit, but slumbered until nine, waking then to see a great patch of sunshine abetting the glare or stare of the gorgeous carpet on the floor.

From beneath the pillow, after fumbling a moment, he drew his mementos of yesterday, looking at one, then the other, with rather a sheepish gaze, the smile on his mouth almost degenerating to a grin. Plainly he felt a trifle ashamed of himself for some reason; but the feeling could not conquer his delight when once more he saw the name, Rosalynde Banderet. And what could he do but

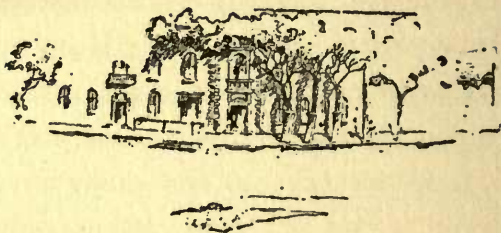
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kiss an autograph like that? If idleness is the parent of vice, it is also the sire of many harmless virtues begotten accidentally.







## Chapter Four

As Breyten was on the point of mounting from the concrete curbing in front of the hotel, he was accosted by a short but heavy-set young man, who had followed him out from the office to say: "Pardon me, but that is a remarkably attractive wheel of yours. Whose make is it?"

The voice had good-fellowship in its tone. Breyten felt, before he looked up, that he should see a comely face; but he was not prepared for what met his eyes. The man was handsome, that could not be questioned; yet the magnetism of his

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countenance, which was instantaneous, really seemed not due to any happy arrangement of features. It was a ray from within, out of the darkness, one might say, for his face was of a dusky olive, while his eyes, hair, brows, and mustache were nut-brown, with a dark-yellowish gloom hovering about them.

"Yes, it's a good wheel," said Breyten promptly. "I had it made just to my liking. You see, it has the good points of all the best makes. It is a concession in my behalf by several patentees."

"You have come to enter the races at our spring meet, I presume."

Breyten came near demanding the man's right to indulge so violent a presumption. He had never heard of the Hawford spring meet, and certainly he was not a racing man; but there was something in the face before him which

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forbade rebuke with peremptory directness. Besides, the man was lame, short of one leg by three inches, the lack filled out with an enormous boot-sole of cork.

"No; I don't race," said Breyten; "I'm only a tourist looking at the country."

Thus, by mere accident—or is there such a thing as accident?—came Alfred Rayle into the ken of Frederick Breyten, and both men knew almost immediately that the meeting meant something in the strange scheme of existence.

Breyten mounted and passed out of town, gradually increasing his speed as the roadsides flaunted their rural verdure and the country freshness began to stimulate him. Not once did it come into his mind that there might be failure at the end of his ride; nor was he conscious before reaching the bridge that he was doing a very foolish thing. There, however,

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while the glow of expectation was highest, he suddenly saw things change, as it were from poetry to prose. The whole landscape took on a commonplace countenance. He dismounted on the spot where he had last seen Rosalynde Banderet. Plucking at his mustache, he gazed around with a decidedly stupid stare, not enthusiastic enough to smile at his own folly or to recall himself from a state of indifference.

Of course the young lady was nowhere in sight; why should she be? Had Breyten really expected her? After all, his coming back to the bridge meant nothing more than poetical impulses have always meant.

After three minutes of blank, listless staring around, he pulled himself together and laughed. He propped his bicycle against the rail of the bridge and

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went below, curious to see the spot upon which Rosalynde Banderet had crouched. It was not a romantic place, rather dirty, cobwebbed in the angles, ill-smelling. With his hands in his pockets he surveyed the ground, until a dainty shoe-print caught his eye.

"Rosalynde Banderet," he thought aloud, "I'll find you yet."

Then he laughed at himself and pedaled back into Hawford, disappointed in an indefinite way, yet not defeated. He had plenty of time, and the little town appeared attractive, viewed as a place in which to spend a month or two; furthermore, had not the thought of studying the life, or rather experiencing the life, of the middle west often interested him? You see he was already framing a foundation for the excuse he needed.

Instead of returning directly to the



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hotel, Breyten made a swing round the residence part of Hawford, taking a leisurely survey, not so much to observe as to think, and most of all to let his imagination settle.

Breyten may have been in just the frame of spirit to be most favorably impressed with what he saw ; but any tourist would have been delighted with the cleanliness, freshness, and repose of the little city embowered in its manifold greeneries and blown upon by the weather of a day supremely golden, balmy, with bees in many a cherry tree, all white with flowers,—a paradise of robins in every close.

One broad street lying east and west, tree-fringed on either side, had been chosen, as the houses showed, by some of Hawford's most substantial citizens. It was, indeed, a double row of attractive

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homes, which were set well back amid their trees, with shrubby clumps in profusion and broad white walks of concrete leading straight from street-gate to stoop.

Near the end of the street Breyten found himself opposite a large house which attracted his attention on account of its unlikeness to all the others. Not exactly venerable in appearance, it looked older than it really was; a stately structure, plain, weatherbeaten, solid, built of brick and painted drab, it stood on a knoll thickly surrounded with wide-armed forest trees.

Just as he was passing the drab gate of the old place two persons, a man and a girl, went up the walk towards the house. The man was lame and proceeded slowly, leaning on a knotty cane, while his companion gently kept pace with him. An absurdly unattractive little dog followed

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at the girl's heels, bearing itself as if conscious of a gazing world.

Breyten knew instantly that Rosalynde Banderet was once more under his eye.

He recognized the lame man as the one who spoke to him at the hotel, and there was something in the movement and proportions of the poor fellow's figure that suggested a satyr or some other half-beautiful, half-monstrous plaything of nature. Nor could there be any doubt, after a single glance, as to the influence Miss Banderet was, perhaps unconsciously, exerting over him. He was looking at her as a child looks at a star. Breyten knew this by the pose of his head and the slight drooping of his body towards her. A stroke, subtly keen, fell upon Breyten's breast at the same time, sending a pang through his heart—a pang mixed of joy and its opposite; for there

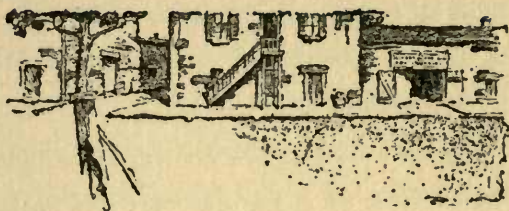
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was a formless, nebulous pathos in the scene.

He could not linger gazing, and the thought of making the book and handkerchief an excuse for entering that quiet close did not come into his mind; so he rode back to the hotel. After all, he had accomplished something, more, indeed, than he had expected; but why this sorrowful faint shadow, this obscure taint in the sunshine of his dream? A thrush in a garden hedge sang of its love with just the same hint of indefinable sadness.





## Chapter Five

Rayle was attempting the impossible, trying to learn art without a teacher and with no masterpieces from which to absorb a sense of technical correctness. If he had genius, his work did not testify to it. Like the penniless provincial the world over, his regard for wealth being a distortion, he looked upon success as in some way connected with a happy financial condition. If he had money, the rest would be easy. But he had no money worth naming, six hundred dollars annually from property left in trust for him by an



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uncle being his only income save the little he earned by coloring photographs and doing a portrait once in a while.

He took Breyten to his studio in the upper story of a rickety building, part of which was occupied by baled hay and other horse-feed. A livery stable was next door, and across the street "Barney Hart's Saloon" was squeezed hard between a bakery and a meat-shop.

Breyten followed Rayle up the stairway, which was outside of the building at the edge of an alley, feeling in advance the pathos of what he was going to see. His sense of humor, however, received a shock when he entered the room, which smelt stuffy and looked grimy. There were two rough easels, a chair and a bench, a three-legged stool, some pictures,—nothing else. On one of the easels a large canvas held a landscape in

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oil, stiffly drawn and crudely colored, hideously uninteresting, yet in a way true to nature, not unlike a photograph daubed over with greens and browns and blues. Breyten looked around, and a great laugh arose in him which he had trouble to keep from roaring forth. Then involuntarily he turned short and faced Rayle, who had stepped behind him as they entered.

For a minute there was an awkward silence, while Rayle's dark eyes seemed to search Breyten's soul to its farthest limit, and while Breyten made a great effort to keep an equilibrium of countenance.

At the point of greatest tension in the silence an enormous rat leaped out from a dark corner of the room and scampered noisily across the floor to a hole near another corner: That was the cue. Brey-

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ten let go his hold upon all the laughter that had accumulated. Rayle fairly recoiled before the explosion; but he caught himself, and laughed rather perfunctorily in response. He gave Breyten the chair, and took the stool for himself.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered, "for bringing you here. I know it's not interesting to you."

"Why, yes," said Breyten briskly; "it is interesting; I'm glad I came. It is a quiet, comfortable place. We can have a chat. Forgive my laugh; the rat was so big and so sudden."

Sitting upon the tripod, Rayle looked peculiarly crumpled and pathetic, notwithstanding his fine head and well-set shoulders. He glanced uneasily at his landscape, then asked Breyten if he took any interest in painting.

"Not much," was the answer. "I tried

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it awhile, went to Paris to study, daubed some canvas, and was a great failure. You see I'm not a genius, and one must have the gift. Nature first, art next."

A flush mounted into Rayle's cheeks. "Yes, the natural gift is the main thing, they say." He spoke as if under great restraint. "It seems to me, however, that money plays the big part in the game. How can genius find out what it has never seen or felt or heard?"

"I don't know how, but it does," said Breyten. "It needs no aid."

"Well, frankly, I don't believe a word of any such stuff," said Rayle with energy. "Give me money, and I'll do the rest."

"Oh, I don't know about the efficacy of money in the matter of art," Breyten lightly remarked; "but we all need it, doubtless, more than we are willing to



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acknowledge. I squandered some trying to do what you think of doing. If I had that money back now I could use it to better purpose; but it's gone, and I've nothing to show for it."

His words were meant to deceive, and they did to a degree; but Rayle knew that Breyten was freer, happier, and richer than himself, and so what he said did not bring comfort. Besides, his leg was paining him, and it was torture, yet a torture that he eagerly sought, to look at Breyten's genial face, where health, strength, and activity were combined in every ray of expression.

"I had a selfish purpose in decoying you up here into this hole," said Rayle after a few moments of silence, with a smile not altogether dismal. "I want you to tell me if I have any real talent for—for this business." He waved his hand



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to signify that his remark comprehended what the room was dedicated to. "Somehow I had made up my mind, before you spoke of having studied art in Paris, that you knew more than I about it. Now I want you to be frank with me."

Breyten was speechless. Indeed, what could he say?

"I'll tell you the whole thing," Rayle went on when Breyten did not speak. "It's just this: I have a small estate, held in trust for me, from which I get fifty dollars a month. My lawyer has just discovered that I can sell the property, although it was the donor's intention to prevent it. Now, if I have real talent I want to know it, and I'll sell out and go away to study. That's the long and short of the matter."

He fidgeted on the stool and a dark glow rose in his face. This way of blush-

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ing gave him a look of shyness not particularly becoming, and made him appear less at ease than he really was.

Breyten looked at him steadily for a moment. "You are just as I was when I got the painter's bee in my bonnet," he said, with his pleasantest smile and in a voice meant to be very light and careless. "It's like love; it has a way of humming until it distracts a fellow—that bee." He was silent for a moment, then added: "How long have you been at this? How long have you worked at your—art?"

"It isn't art; you know it isn't, and you needn't hesitate," said Rayle promptly and frankly enough. "I know as well as you do that it's ridiculous; but I wanted you to see it just as it is. If you should go to speaking favorably of it I could not respect your taste; but can I ever learn? If I go to where I can get the

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best help, can I finally be an artist? That's what I want to know."

There was absolute earnestness in his voice, and Breyten felt something manly and courageous come along with his words.

"You don't see much here to back my aspirations, do you? I didn't expect you would." Rayle laughed mechanically.

"You jump to a conclusion," Breyten replied quickly. "I have not yet had time to examine or to think." While he was speaking, his eyes fell upon Rayle's drawn leg and clumsy shoe, and a thrill of pity shot through his breast. "But," he added, "I should imagine that your work here would be in your way when you—"

"Yes," Rayle interrupted almost breathlessly. "I should have to begin over again, I know that. But what do

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you think of the outcome? Am I mistaken in myself? Is there nothing in me?"

"Well, how do I know? I am no mind-reader." They both laughed, Rayle rather doggedly. Breyten went on: "You might have superb genius and I not see it at a glance. What do you honestly think of yourself when you lie in bed pondering over this subject?"

"My self-trust never weakens for a moment, save when I read of those men who have overcome poverty, disease, and every other possible hindrance to genius. I doubt myself then; for somehow I can not break through anything; I have none of the shiftiness of those fellows, and there has never come to me one of those lifting waves of opportunity to hoist me into the current of success."

"And if one should come—if a wind-fall of fortune should give you ample



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means—do you feel sure that you would be able to make the most of it?”

“I could at least settle the question and find out. I could measure myself by a true standard, and I tell you that I believe in myself; yet”—and his voice faltered as he looked gloomily around the room—“you can see that I’ve no reason to.”

Breyten rose as if to go; but he stood a moment looking into Rayle’s eyes and smiling. Then in a tone of present dismissal he said:

“We’ll talk this subject over again when you have discovered that my opinions aren’t worth a straw. A vagabond wheelman is not just the safest adviser in a serious matter. One thing, however, I’ll say emphatically: Don’t sell your estate; let the trustee continue to hold it. A six-hundred-dollar income is



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better than no income. What I have is safely invested, and I manage to make both ends meet without disturbing the principal. It's the only safe way."

Rayle had risen from the stool and was fingering his knotty stick. He looked up at Breyten, who towered above him, and said:

"You might as well be done with me at once. I shall be a great bore as long as you are at the hotel. You see I'm desperately in earnest and absolutely selfish. How long are you to remain in Hawford?"

Suddenly Breyten recollected something that had been obscurely worrying him all the morning, and he answered Rayle's question with a mental reference to it.

"That depends," he said; "my humor is uncertain. And, by the way, I have a

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pleasant yet difficult little duty to perform before I go away from this happy little town. Do you know a young lady by the name of Rosalynde Banderet?"

A change came into Rayle's dark face. It was as if a light had flashed through it, with a tender illumination trailing behind it, like the faint shimmering after a meteor in the dusky evening sky.

"Yes," he said, "I am acquainted with her."

"Well, I have some things of hers that I am anxious to return to her. Does she live in the large old house on Wabash Street?"

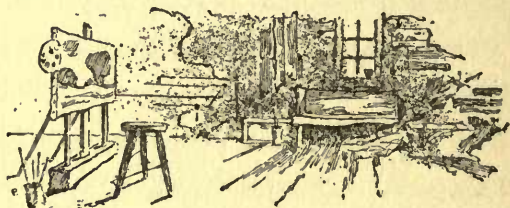
"What have you that belongs to her?" Rayle demanded. Then, "I beg pardon," he added, "I have no right to ask. Yes, she lives on Wabash Street."

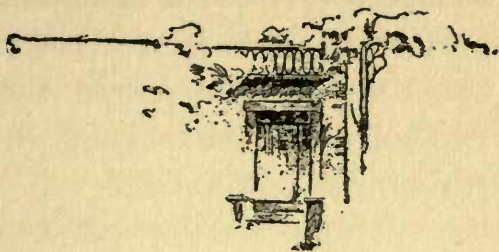
The two young men looked straight into each other's eyes: Breyten broke

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away first; he did not like something in Rayle's look. Not that it was disagreeable or threatening; what he saw was beautiful. It was because it was beautiful that he did not like it. He walked back to the hotel thinking in words to himself: "The poor fellow loves her."





## Chapter Six

Breyten all at once found himself timid, uneasy, foolishly hesitating in front of the house on Wabash Street. That is, he was girl-shy, and actually felt like running away.

He had dismounted from his bicycle in front of the gate, had even leaned it against the fence, and was gazing up the walk with an expression of countenance not significant of any settled purpose. Indeed, he looked like a big boy suddenly stricken with embarrassment. He stuffed his hands into the pockets of his bicycling

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coat; with one of them he fumbled the little red book, while he thought of the handkerchief in his cap, and stood by the gate as if half afraid to open it.

A distinct sense of relief caused his face to resume somewhat its accustomed expression when he saw an elderly gentleman come round an angle of the house and, cane in hand, approach him, stepping down the walk with the stiff, jerky gait of rheumatism. He wore a black frock-coat, a silk hat, and dark-gray trousers, all extremely neat, yet unmistakably far from new. The dingy black neckerchief under his old-fashioned collar was three inches wide and tied in a tight little knot. His ample, much-wrinkled, and brilliantly polished shoes looked a trifle too heavy for his long, slender legs, which were peculiarly sharp at the knees.

Breyten lifted his cap, and the old man



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said: "How do you do, sir?" very promptly and with pleasant dignity, repeating, after a slight pause, "How do you do?"

Breyten opened the gate for him, and, stepping aside, held it so while he passed out upon the sidewalk.

The old man turned a pair of keen steel-gray eyes upon the young fellow, as if to look him through, then, glancing at the bicycle against the fence, said: "It bids fair to be a warm day." After which he stood, evidently not quite sure of his memory, passing his left hand over his forehead. He could not recollect Breyten, but took it for granted that he was one of the young men about town who might some day vote for him and he did not like to appear forgetful.

"You were going in. Was it to see me?" He smiled a fine political smile.

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"I will go back to the house with you. Come."

"No," said Breyten. "I am going in to see Miss Rosalynde—"

"Ah," the old man interrupted with a wave of the hand, "she'll be right glad to see you, Mr.—"

"Breyten is my name."

"Mr. Breyten. Yes. You'll find her in, I think. Go in, Mr. Breyten, go in." The genial stereotyped smile deepened on his face as he bowed and passed on down the street.

Thereupon Breyten burned the bridge behind him. That is to say, he went in and shut the gate, breathing freer. His heart fluttered blithely while he strode towards the house, hearing the robins and catbirds singing in the trees round about. Up the steepish walk under the intertwin-  
ing branches a queer little dog trotted

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ahead of him. It had come out of a shrubby clump hard by. A blue ribbon around its neck was tied above in a bow with short streamers.

Mounting six or seven steps to a broad stoop under a hanging balcony, Breyten pounded vigorously, waking echoes within, at which the grotesque little dog, now wriggling at his feet, barked as if life depended upon noise. And when a little later the door was gently opened, in scampered the clever brute and joyously leaped upon Miss Rosalynde Banderet's dainty morning gown.

Breyten was not prepared for the apparition of Miss Banderet in the hall. He had expected that a servant would open the door. The dog, however, neutralized surprise with his mad antics. He jumped as high as his young mistress's waistband, and tried to seize certain fluffy

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ornaments above it with his teeth. His paws left dusty tracks on the skirt. Mutual recognition flashed meantime between the two young people. Breyten, stooping quickly, took hold of the dog's nape and held it up bodily, whining and kicking for a moment, then tossed it out upon the floor of the stoop and closed the door with a brisk shove.

"Now then, good-morning, Miss Banderet," he said, turning towards her in the twilight of the hall and bowing, cap in hand.

She looked straight past him. The little dog was scratching at the door and querulously begging to be let in.

"You have hurt Bobby," she said; "he is crying. Let me open the door."

Breyten pulled the great brass knob, and in popped the atrocious beast, bounding and frisking.

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"He seems lively enough," remarked Breyten, just as he tore a considerable rent in Miss Banderet's gown. "Shall I fling him out again?"

"No," she said, rather pathetically regarding the damage. Then she pounced upon Bobby and took him in her arms, where he delightedly nestled, winking his wicked little eyes and protruding his tongue.

"I met a gentleman at the gate," he quickly said, "your father, I suppose, and he told me to come in, that you were here; so I thought I might step in and inquire if you lost anything of value under the bridge the other day during the storm."

She looked up at him very demurely while he was fumbling in his cap for the handkerchief, which, when he had disengaged it, he held towards her. The dog snatched it, but she took it from him and



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quickly scrutinized it, then laughed.

"Thank you," she said; "but it was not worth the trouble."

"Perhaps this is more valuable," and he produced the little book, which Bobby promptly snapped at in vain. Breyten held it above his reach.

"It is kind of you. The book is of account to me." She took it almost eagerly. "I am glad to get it."

"Then why did you run away and leave it in my possession?"

"An explanation would not be interesting," she said, as if to close the conversation. "You have been very kind." She took a step away from him; he felt dismissed. He laid a hand upon the door-knob and looked up at the stucco rosette on the ceiling, from which depended a curious old chandelier, then again straight into her beautiful eyes. There was in

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his gaze a frank appeal for more generous treatment, but she only looked down and patted Bobby's villainous head with the little red book just recovered.

Another luminous thought flared across Breyten's mind. So he laughed and said:

"This is the first time that I was ever in a house where they didn't offer me a chair. Even when they put me in jail in Russia, thinking me an assassin, they bade me be seated."

There was something irresistibly pleasing in his voice. His nature charged it with unmistakable honesty.

Rosalynde Banderet's cheeks flushed as she looked up to meet his smiling eyes. He was certainly the handsomest man she had ever seen, and there could be no doubt about his gentility and his worthiness: such a man could not be capable of abus-

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ing confidence; and besides, what possible harm could come of treating him kindly?

"Forgive me," she said, "I was very thoughtless. I—"

"You shall forgive me, rather," he hastened to break in with, "and I will try to make amends for my foolish boldness. Of course, I'm a stranger; I have no right to overstep a stranger's limitations. I was staying here for a few days; I could not go away without bringing the book and the handkerchief to you; but it was impossible to come with letters of introduction or give a bond for my good behavior. It's hard on a fellow to be a stranger among strangers. I feel helpless."

His tone was light to a degree; but under it something like deep regret welled up and thrilled Rosalynde strangely, mak-

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ing her feel that in some way she was wronging him. She had never been in the presence of a man who was so much a stranger in a wide sense of the word. He impressed her as one who had come from a very far country where men were greatly different from those of her acquaintance; but instead of being romantic on that account, he seemed intensely real, concentratedly modern, and unconventional. She was not thinking this; her mind lay confused and fluttering, so to say, unable to analyze or understand its condition; but the impression was clear enough afterwards, when Breyten had gone away.

“Ours has been a short and curious acquaintance,” he said. “I presume that it ends here, and I am sorry for it. Good-by, Miss Banderet.” He let go the knob,

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shifted his cap into his left hand, and held his right towards her.

Bobby obligingly took it between his acicular teeth with surprising deftness and vigor. It was bleeding when Breyten snatched it away, his grimace telling how hard it was not to wring Bobby's neck on the spot. Miss Banderet apologized; she even flung the little dog down and made him hasten about scampering out of the hall; then she offered to examine Breyten's hurt, and finally bandaged the bleeding hand, which was but scratched, with the handkerchief that he had returned to her. This accomplished, there seemed to be nothing further to say or do, only Breyten thought that they might make another attempt to say good-by.

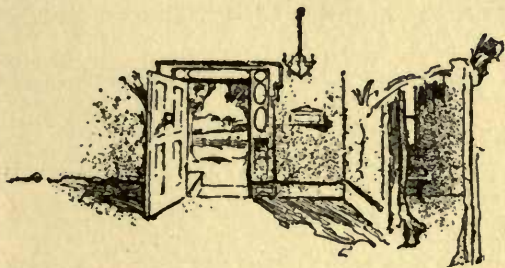
When Breyten rode away from the gate

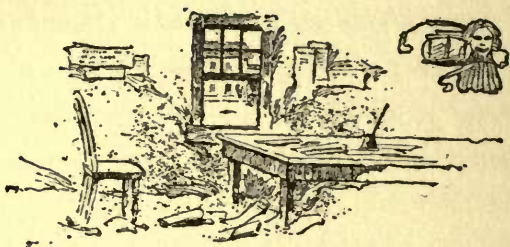


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he saw Rayle coming up the sidewalk towards the house. He was hobbling along painfully, leaning on his knotty stick.





## Chapter Seven

Rosalynde Banderet was the orphan of a soldier, who, wounded at Gettysburg, had lingered a cripple for twenty years and died, leaving her, his only child, motherless, to be cared for by her grandfather, General Lucien Banderet, a distinguished politician. These particulars Breyten learned without much exertion. It furthermore came to him that the General was having some trouble about securing the nomination he desired. It seemed that a younger man, reputed to be very rich, was becoming a dangerous an-

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tagonist. The General's financial condition forbidding what is called fighting fire with fire, his friends were feeling that unless something better than mere oratory could be offered in his behalf there might soon be a stampede in favor of the man with the money, and the situation was the subject of hot street talk, which could not be excluded from the smoking-room of the hotel.

Breyten opened his ears to all this and more. It interested him peculiarly on account of Miss Banderet's indirect connection with it. He felt that in some way he had a part to perform in the drama which seemed about to open.

He sat in a corner of the little smoking-room, and, though not a smoker himself, enjoyed seeing Rayle puff out the fragrance of a dark Havana that he had given him, while three or four political workers

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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at a little distance were cautiously yet violently debating the advisability of the party demanding General Banderet's withdrawal from the race. The men were from Indianapolis, and had been sent to Hawford to inquire into the matter.

"Well, all I've got to say, I can say right now," blurted one of them. "A man who can't raise enough money to make a decent campaign's got no business sticking up his head for a nomination. There's too much at stake; we can't afford any nonsense. Of course, General Banderet is the very man we want, personally; but he's in no financial shape. Why, there's a mortgage on everything he's got; even the house he lives in's got six thousand on it."

"All the old soldiers are behind the General; he can get them every one, Democrat and Republican. If we pull him off

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they'll all be mad, and the devil'll be to pay."

"Well, then, we'll have to spring a dark horse; for there's no use talking, we've got to have money. We can't turn a wheel without it."

These scraps of the mumbled yet earnest conversation, hotly spiced with profanity and slang, drifted brokenly into Breyten's ears. It seemed that Rayle, too, heard some of it; for he presently leaned forward and said, speaking low:

"As I said to you in my studio, it requires money to do anything, Mr. Breyten, no matter what. Of course, if the old General is nominated they will all support him, money or no money. What he needs is five or ten thousand dollars to take him through the convention, and it looks as if he will not be able to raise that amount or any other."



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"But, if he is honest, how can he use money in politics?" Breyten demanded with unhesitating bluntness.

"He couldn't and wouldn't use it corruptingly," said Rayle; "he's above it, and besides, there's no need. What he wants is money to rent half of the best hotel in Indianapolis for a week, and to bear his expenses through the convention: wine and cigars for his friends, a brass band, and a hundred or so clackers. You see a great deal depends upon show and noise. The General understands the business, if he but had capital. He has never been beaten; but this time it looks as though he might go under. His enemies have set his creditors to nagging him just at the right time to injure him most."

"But would election help the matter in the long run? Would that probably save him?"

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"Certainly. It would give him credit, and, if necessary, aid. If he carried the party through, it could afford to be liberal."

Breyten was silent for a while. Presently, in a casual tone, he inquired:

"Has the General any family—any one dependent upon him for support?"

"His granddaughter."

"Miss Rosalynde?"

"Yes."

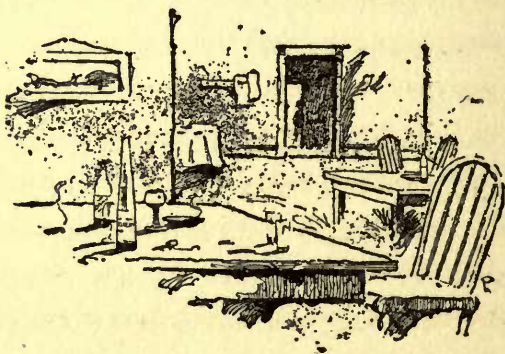
A steady, hard, searching look passed between the two young men. It was as if by a single thrust of the eyes they meant to pierce each other through and be done. After a moment Breyten said: "It's pathetic; it's a shame."

They parted for the night without further discussion of the subject in which they had been so easily and so disturbingly entangled together. Breyten went

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to his room with a dim sense of being on the brink of some new and questionable experience, in which, as in a bewildered mist, he should have to feel his way blindly. And his night-cap resolution was that he would quietly wheel away from Hawford on the morrow's morning.





## Chapter Eight

Freedom to do just as he wished doubtless operated against Breyten when morning came, and he faced his resolve of the night before. He was up early, feeling the intoxication of pure delight in life. From his wide open windows he saw that Hawford was responding through all its groves and gardens to an access of golden weather.

Suddenly he recollected that he had determined upon wheeling away from Hawford, that he ought to be packing his bags and giving orders about how and where

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they were to be sent to intercept him. He grinned indulgently at himself, as it were, feeling that there was about as much likelihood of an earthquake before breakfast as that he should depart without again seeing Miss Rosalynde Banderet.

He rang and ordered a simple breakfast brought to his room, ate heartily, sipped his coffee in a reverie as brown as the liquid itself, and then wrote two or three letters, one of which comes within the limits of this history. It was to his confidential agent and attorney in New York. Part of it ran thus:

*"You will please send at once fifteen thousand dollars to the First National Bank of Hawford, Indiana, to be placed to the credit of General Lucien Banderet. Do this in such a way that said Banderet can never find out whence the money*



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*came. I am particular on this point. . . . I also desire you to send to the same bank, with the same secrecy, five thousand dollars to be credited to Alfred Rayle. You will write a letter to each of the above-named persons, informing him curtly of the fact that a friend who wishes to be unknown has sent the money. To General Lucien Banderet you will say further that a part of the money is to pay the mortgage on his home in Hawford, the rest is to defray the expenses of his campaign for the office of governor. To Alfred Rayle say that he is to use the amount sent him in pursuing art-study in Paris. Be careful that nothing in your letter (which is to bear no signature) can possibly suggest a clue to the donor. I trust you to attend to this promptly and cleverly."*

Breyten smiled a self-approving smile

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and stroked his mustache when this letter had been sealed and addressed; his face showed that he felt the stimulation following a disinterested act of kindness.

And now for a ten-mile morning spin; he must work off his excess of animal energy, and at the same time have the wide country's ample room in which to waste his accumulation of pleasant, nay joyous, fancies.

A young man with an annual net income of two hundred thousand dollars is to be congratulated when he finds five thousand a year an ample allowance for all his wants. To some men the surplus one hundred and ninety-five thousand would be a most exhilarating matter of contemplation, especially when the capital affording it was mostly in desirable business buildings and government bonds, giving the least possible trouble to their

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owner. But Breyten had no feeling one way or another about his continually increasing wealth; it was a part of him, so that, when he used it, the act was, like breathing or eating or, perhaps, yawning, a mere response to some actual or fancied need.

A sudden impulse to scorch for a mile or two sent him off at a reckless gait, dusting the air behind him, grinding the surface-pebbles under the growling tires. He sped like a shot, ricochetting rapidly yet almost imperceptibly along the roadway to some distant and invisible target.

And Breyten was a missile speeding straight to a target. It was fate. His immense energy was driving him faster and faster, and unerringly. He forgot that he was in a public highway where other people, every person, indeed, in the whole world, had as much right to move as he;

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forgot that it was unlawful to go tearing madly in the path of the people's pleasure and traffic; forgot, in short, where he was, what he was, and what way he was flying, until presently he hit the target. It was at a turn of the road.

Breyten was going head down, seeing the roadway not farther than twenty feet before him, the intoxication of rapid motion adding to his strenuous expenditure of force. His short, curly hair fluttered and gleamed as the air caught it; the muscles on the back of his neck were taut, standing forth, smooth and large, while the motion of his limbs gave to his body a slight rhythmical sway from side to side. It was at last a speed dangerous to the bicycle's machinery; for the man's weight, at such speed, made the impact of tire upon pebble or insignificant bump in the road a stroke of almost incalculable



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power. But in the glow of excitement, feeling the scorcher's delicious madness bubbling in his blood, Breyten thought of nothing, save yet a little increment of speed, until at the turn of the road—crash!

Now, just before the catastrophe, there was a flash of yellow and brown. It was as if an oriole had come darting down the road to meet him, and Breyten knew in that twinkle of tragic time just what it was.

They rushed together—and the end of it was a realistic accident at which the community was called upon to grimace and shudder. The man and the maid were found lying insensible side by side in the road amid the tangled shreds of their bicycles. Breyten had a double fracture of the right leg and a concussion which at first bade fair to kill him without a re-



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turn to consciousness. Miss Rosalynde Banderet had no bones broken, yet she was, the doctors feared, more dangerously hurt than Breyten: possibly there was a spinal lesion.

It was a nine-day subject of conversation in Hawford, a bit of choice news for the daily papers, and then General Banderet's household was left with the main burden to bear; for in the excitement and confusion following the terrible affair Breyten had been taken along with Miss Banderet to the General's home, and there the doctors said he would have to stay, or die in course of removal. Of course, he stayed, and for a long time. As usual, however, the doctors were wrong in their first hasty conclusion, especially as to Miss Banderet's injuries. Barring a great shock and some painful contusions, neither dangerous nor disfiguring, she es-

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caped whole, and was out of bed within a week. The missile was hurt far worse than the target. Breyten lay for two months, his heart-beats mere pendulum-strokes counting the uncertainties of his fluttering, faltering life. The efficient surgeon attending him exhausted his science and art, made the fight for him with consummate watchfulness and patience, and, aided by Breyten's perfect physical soundness and vigor, at last gained the victory.

Meantime the remittances arrived from the unknown donor, fifteen thousand to the General, five thousand to Alfred Rayle. The notification from the First National Bank of Hawford was the first hint to the lucky men of their strange stroke of fortune; but neither knew the other's surprising secret. General Banderet could not credit his vision when he

## Rosalynde's Lovers

opened the note, so he bustled off to the bank in an ill-suppressed mood of mind bordering on utter demoralization, but he managed to appear reasonably indifferent, as if the whole affair were a matter of course. There was no explanation forthcoming, and he demanded none. The credit was duly entered in the little yellow bank-book that he always carried in the inside pocket of his long frock-coat; then he cracked some political jokes with the cashier, who was of the other party, and went out laughing.

As for Rayle, his surprise came like a blow, leaving him numb and dazed. He could not think nor feel on the subject. For a whole day he carried the bank's curt notification in his pocket and did nothing about it. When he began to recover his reasoning powers, the first impression was that some person had attempted a joke

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upon him, and he came near tearing up the note; but after sleeping a night over it he was impatient for the bank to open in the morning so that he could test the matter. What if it were true!

"You're in luck," said the cashier pleasantly. "Wish somebody'd do something like it for me."

"Who—who was it?" Rayle demanded, his voice almost betraying his deep inner excitement.

"You know as much about it as we do," said the cashier rather indifferently. "It's from New York, and no name given." He smiled perfunctorily and turned to another customer.

On his way back to his room Rayle dropped in at the post-office, where he was handed the anonymous letter from Breyten's attorney in New York. This added heavily to the weight of mystery. Gen-

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eral Banderet fared the same, but fancied that his windfall came from a political source; he even suspected a very rich friend of his in New York. But Rayle had no clue. To him the whole thing was like a golden dream, out of which he half expected to be startled at the next moment by some realistic sound or touch.

A day or two passed before he could break his secret to Rosalynde, whose rapid convalescence was already advanced to the stage of sitting, airily robed, on a window-seat in the library, and looking out under the trees at the robins hopping gingerly in the short grass.

Miss Banderet's prompt acceptance of her lover's good luck as quite a reality, to be made the most of without delay, greatly encouraged Rayle, lifted him out of the fog, so to speak, and sent him in the way of clearly viewing the situation.



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They talked it all over and over, as lovers are wont to talk over every new turn in their prospect, and settled and unsettled the plan of action as often as they talked, until it was finally determined that Rayle must at once set out for Paris and rush his studies with all his might, cram two or three years into one, seize upon the rich core of art and tear it out for his own separate use and benefit, then come back ready for work that should amaze the world. It looked so possible, so probable, so certain, so easy to their simple provincial vision, which could not distinguish the humor and the pathos of the picture nor the stiff seriousness lurking in its every line. However, Rayle has his money, he has kissed Rosalynde, and with a high heart is off for Paris.





## Chapter Nine

At the time of Alfred Rayle's departure for Paris, Breyten was lying helpless in bed, scarcely conscious, with his leg in a plaster cast. The doctors, however, had decided that he would get well, provided no unexpected trouble should set in; for already the man's amazing strength and vitality were doing wonders, and the wounds showed unmistakable signs of betterment from day to day. The most difficult and dangerous part of the surgeon's task was managing the injury at the back

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of Breyten's head, the cause of his semi-comatose condition.

In June Breyten began to bring himself together, slowly comprehending his condition, taking cognizance of his surroundings detail by detail, what time a phlegmatic male nurse shuffled noiselessly in and out of his large, airy room. He was consolingly aware, as by an indirect beam of consciousness, that he had been having glimpses of Rosalynde Banderet flitting to and fro somewhere within the field of vision, a bright and lissome figure gently rustling, sweetly suggestive of heliotrope and violet; and as he waxed stronger, his mind clearing apace, there came upon him a great desire to have her at his bedside to look at and talk to. Her voice was somewhere near the foreground of his memory, as if it had just died on the air and were still sweetly echoing within him.

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He knew that during his half-conscious state she had hovered near, and that with the first dawn of his recovery she had slipped away. It was delicious knowledge, just suited to his mood as he lay on his back contemplating the stucco rosette in the middle of the ceiling. He heard the old clock on the stair-landing pounding off the seconds, and with the tail of an eye saw the flaccid red-haired nurse sitting by a window reading a book. There was a vast comicality in the fellow's expression.

“Well, now, who upon earth are you?” Breyten demanded, after studying the stolid face and stuffy figure for five minutes. His voice was not as weak as one would have expected it to be, yet it lacked the fulness and the resonant power it once had. “You are deaf and dumb, eh?”

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he added, when the nurse, taken by surprise, failed to speak.

"Yes, sir—um, no, sir. What'd you say, sir?"

Breyten tried to laugh, but his facial muscles acted stiffly and appeared to draw his eyes deeper into his head. He was sadly emaciated.

"Sh-h, sir," continued the nurse, laying aside the book and lifting a hand with deprecatory emphasis. "You're not to talk now; 'taint good for ye."

Breyten reflected a moment in some confusion; then—

"You put on airs. When were you elected governor of me?" he half-humorously, half-petulantly inquired. "Hand me something to throw at your head."

Just then the surgeon entered, moving to the bedside with catlike swiftness, his bland face beaming surprise and interro-



## Rosalynde's Lovers

gation. He looked at Breyten as if he expected something tragic; but his face quickly brightened.

"Ah, good-morning," he said, laying a hand gently upon his patient's wrist. "You feel pretty well, I see. Don't worry yourself to speak. I'm your doctor,"—this in answer to an inquiring look,—“and I don't want you to think or speak much for a while. Your pulse is excellent, you are getting on famously. All that you need is rest. You must be patient,”—Breyten had scowled atrociously at him; —“you must not excite yourself; you—”

“I want some water—cold water, a quart—to drink,” Breyten hoarsely interrupted: “I've a beastly thirst.”

Obedient to the doctor's glance, the nurse shuffled out; but before he returned with the water Breyten had fallen away again into a gentle sleep, from which he did not

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wake for two hours. He dreamed of Rosalynde. He saw her before him, close, and yet far off, as if through miles of shimmering mist. He spoke to her, but without voice, quite unable to make her hear; he tried to touch her, but his hand lay powerless; at the same time he heard a dove cooing, and felt a light current of air running over him with soothing effect, and he knew that the window beside his bed was open. Then the old clock on the stair-landing struck eleven, and he half opened his eyes.

Rosalynde Banderet was gliding towards the door that gave into the hall. Half turned from him, her face showed a pretty, clear-cut profile.

"Don't go away from me; come back! come back!" he suddenly called. "I want you."

She faced him with a quick startled

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movement, and a sweet smile flashed over her face.

"You might be kind to a fellow in such need," he said. "Sit on the chair here and—what's the matter with me? My leg—"

She moved quickly to his bedside. The nurse came in with the water.

"What has happened to me?" Breyten inquired after a pause, during which he was weakly fumbling, trying to make out the meaning of the plaster cast on his leg.

"You've been hurt, sir, and you mustn't talk," said the nurse.

But he did talk, and finally there was nothing to do short of explaining everything to him.

In a few days he was eating well and looking much better. Slowly his cheeks filled out and his eyes regained their happy, steadfast, magnetic light.

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Miss Banderet was kind to him. She chatted with him, saw that the house-keeper and servants neglected nothing conducive to his comfort, and, when the doctor at last permitted it, she read to him an hour every day. This hour had its fascination growing upon Breyten rapidly from the first. He looked forward to it with impatience and back at it with tender, reminiscent delight.

One day during the reading a little servant-girl came to the open door with letters from the post-office. Rosalynde pounced eagerly upon her, and, snatching the tray, selected her own mail, then gave Breyten his, and was off to her room, leaving behind her an indescribable, tantalizing impression of flower-like purity quaintly sophisticated with provincial wisdom. He lay for a long time thinking over all that had passed since that day at

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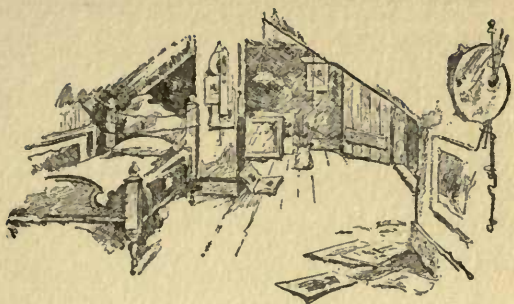
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the bridge, and trying to realize the meaning of it, for somehow one always feels that there is a meaning in each group of incidents affecting one's life.

There was, however, a certain drop of gall in his cup of reflections. The glimpse of a foreign postage-stamp on one of Rosalynde's letters, and the flush of joy on her cheek when she saw it, told him that the missive was from Rayle.







## Chapter Ten

During the tedious process of what Breyten called "sloughing his shell," which was getting rid of the plaster cast, there was not much that he could do for himself beyond nagging at the nurse, Harper, and counting the seconds between times when Rosalynde, a punctual visitor, came in to see him; but when at last the stiff crust was removed from his leg he began forthwith to contemplate getting out of bed. Here again he surprised the little surgeon, for the fractures were found to be already not only firmly knit,

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but in every way well, so that within less than a week he could use his leg with almost perfect freedom.

"That's your sound constitution, your absolutely pure blood, your vigorous nerve-centers," said the man of science in a warmly appreciative tone. "You've never abused your fine physique, and in turn it is good to you in your hour of need."

Breyten decided that he would go back to the hotel, but General Banderet laid his veto upon the proposition.

"No, sir, you will permit me to be firm," said the fine old man. "I can not let you be hauled away from my house. Whenever the doctor says that you can safely walk to the hotel, then you may go, if you must. Meantime, just to please me, you will stay right where you are."

The nominating convention was close

## Rosalynde's Lovers

at hand, and the General had little leisure. His young opponent showed great resources and no scruples whatever in using them; he forced the old "war-horse" to such a pitch of speed that there was danger of a break. Excitement reached a stage pretty accurately indicated by the newspaper headlines and double-leaded editorials, which somehow made the very types look frantic. Breyten read the blatant literature of the campaign with a growing impression that General Bandret was pretty sure to be defeated; and for the first time in his life he felt a thrill of political partisanship stir his blood.

"Unless something almost miraculous can be done in your grandfather's favor," he suddenly remarked to Rosalynde one morning, "he's going to be badly defeated in the convention."

She started and gave him a quick look;

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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he saw a faint pallor spread over her cheeks as she said: "Surely not. Why do you think so?"

"Well, I hardly know. I've been reading the pros and cons in the newspapers. Somehow I feel catastrophe in the air."

He was sorry in a moment for having spoken at all,—especially sorry, realizing the brutal frankness of his words; but it was too late to avoid full responsibility, so he went on giving in detail his reasons for fearing that General Banderet was hardly holding his own in the race; but he softened his tone.

"I despise politics," she said, "and I can not understand how a man like grandfather can be so enthusiastic, so vehement in pursuit of office, when he says himself that there's no pay in it."

"I imagine that it's not for the salary that he desires election," Breyten replied.

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"The fascination lies deeper. Ambition is a reckless rider, going at a breakneck gait for the glory of the race and the mad sense of victory when the shouting and applause come on."

"It all seems—seems vulgar to me." She hesitated, then added: "But men—it is different to them, I suppose."

"Not to all of them."

"Not to you?"

"I have been so much abroad that I have never yet cast a vote, much less entered into the scramble of politics."

"Alfred told me"—she flushed—"Mr. Rayle mentioned your having studied art in Paris."

"He was wrong; I did not study, I played. I have always played. Study is a great bore. When you've done your utmost and learned something of which you hope to be the one master, you are



## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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bumped against by a dozen or so fellows who know it ten times better than you do. What's the use?"

"If you are a genius, it is different, isn't it?"

"We don't have geniuses nowadays. If any are born, they die young. They starve early. They can't make a living. The specialists rob them."

"But Alfred—Mr. Rayle—is unfortunate; he is crippled, and you advised him —" She checked herself. "I mean," she went on, "that his case is different; he could not do physical labor."

Breyten laughed at this absolutely frank disclosure of his real meaning.

"We won't apply my sweeping statements to Mr. Rayle," he said. "I don't think that he really fancies himself a genius—"

"Yes, he does," she interrupted, "and so

# *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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do I. He is a genius, and he'll not fail—I know he won't."

"I certainly hope Mr. Rayle will succeed," he presently said. "Of course, I do not know much about him. He impressed me as a man of fine mind and character, and he's handsome, attractive."

"But you have no confidence in the outcome of his venture; you think he will fail; you may as well say it."

"You must at least be prepared for failure. It's really the most probable thing; but I don't regard it as calamity. He can come back and go at something else. Art is not the whole of life."

"I think that, too," she said, "but he doesn't. To him it is different. It's his lameness, I believe, that makes him so terribly in earnest. I did not want him to go."

"You are going to marry Mr. Rayle?"

## Rosalynde's Lovers

Breyten was not sure that such a question was in the least proper. His training and experience had not been of a sort to lead him into the refinements of conventional politeness, but he felt a sudden desire to reach a perfect understanding with her, to have from her own lips confirmation of what he already felt could not be doubted. And yet the mere thought sent a chill through his heart.

"Yes," she answered promptly, as if almost eager to acknowledge it; "we are to be married when he comes back from Paris. It is no secret; our engagement has been announced. This is why I wanted you to tell me just what you thought of his chance to win what he went for."

"He will win, he must win," Breyten said, in a tone that was very sympathetic and encouraging. "In such a case I should win or tear up the whole French

## Rosalynde's Lovers

metropolis," he added after a pause. "When I was there I had no incentive such as—such as you have given him. Were I but in his place—" He caught himself and broke off the sentence. "If he is worthy of his fortune, he will mould fate to his liking."

The girl's brown eyes read his heart while he was speaking in this half-evasive way, and she felt a strange pang in her own breast; but there was nothing for her to say to him, nothing to do but remark that her time was up, that she must go and attend to other duties.

"My time is up, too," he said with a shadowy smile. "I also must go. You have been so good to me. It's choking me to say farewell." He rose and held out his hand. "What a very angel of kindness and comfort you have been to me! Good-by."

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"But no, you are not going now?" she said, making a move to take his hand, but arresting it at the start. "You—you are not well enough." Her voice faltered in her throat.

"The doctor says I am. And besides, it's time: you know it is. Good-by." He spoke huskily.

She offered her hand now, and he was sensible enough to take no liberty of pressure or detention. It was, indeed, a curiously abrupt leave-taking. General Banderet was out.

"I will see him down town, soon, and give him my gratitude and adieux," said Breyten, trying to be airily cheerful. And so he went, not trusting himself to look back until the street-gate clinked behind him. His heart was pounding at his throat, a sensation he had never before felt, and while he stood for a long minute



# Rosalynde's Lovers

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gazing at the stately old house, he realized how powerless he was to resist something that had laid hold of him. Moreover, he knew just what it was.

"I love her! I love her!" he panted forth, all unconscious of the stage-face he was making, or of the almost ludicrous melodramatic attitude he assumed as he clutched the top of the gate and appeared on the point of rending it.

Then he let go his hold on the gate and turned towards the hotel, shaking off the mood with a smile of returning self-confidence. He walked without limping, scarcely showing a sign of his recent injuries.





## Chapter Eleven

As soon as Breyten was gone, Rosalynde began to realize that his presence in the house had meant a great deal to her. A lonesome silence seemed to have filled the halls and chambers when she turned from an upper window, whence, through a rift in the foliage, she had seen him walk away, tall and straight, along the tree-shaded pavement. He disappeared after a pace or two, leaving in her brain an impression not easily cast out.

A few minutes later, when the morning mail was handed in, there were two let-

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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ters from Rayle and his photograph, the latter a tiny, unmounted portrait strikingly lifelike and handsome. Rosalynde turned to these with frank delight; but somehow Paris seemed infinitely distant, as if borne suddenly away to the dimmest of horizons, and the half-smiling face of her lover gave forth no influence save that of remoteness and complete separation. The clear, dark eyes looked at her without interest or speculation; their gaze was a steadfast, luminous indifference.

She read the letters, however, to better effect, for Rayle's style of writing conveyed an immediate impression of reality, and she quickly warmed to his enthusiastic descriptions of his new experiences and surroundings: He had not yet begun his studies, but was going up and down Paris, feasting his provincial eyes

## Rosalynde's Lovers

upon the fascinating urban wonders opening at every turn.

One thing in the letter of latest date struck Rosalynde with the force of a revelation. It referred to the money which had been so mysteriously sent to Rayle.

"I have been thinking it over," he wrote, "and I now feel tolerably certain that our friend Breyten is the person who furnished the money. I do not know that he is rich, but he must be, and I remember things that he said to me, things not particularly significant at the time, yet almost conclusive to my mind when I consider them in perspective and with the light of all the circumstances to help me. Of course, I may be quite off in my conclusion, so it will be best not to speak of it. Whoever it was who sent the money, the amount is but a loan; I am going to pay it back with interest. What a chance it has

## Rosalynde's Lovers

given me! I feel the inspiration of it in every drop of my blood."

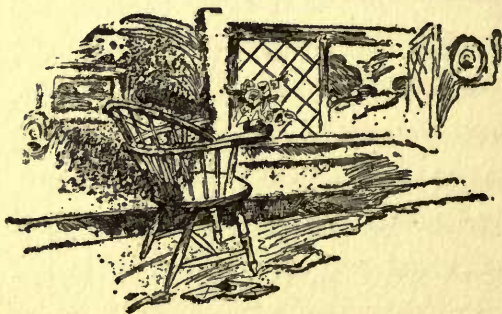
The suggestion of the paragraph corresponded in some way with Rosalynde's mood, and it added greatly to her romantic impression of Breyten's personality. She immediately suspected that her grandfather's money had come from the same source that had supplied Rayle. It was like a fairy story; it burst upon her imagination with strange splendor; and at the same time it seemed to confirm and perfect certain hitherto inchoate suspicions which she had been unable to grasp fully or fairly examine.

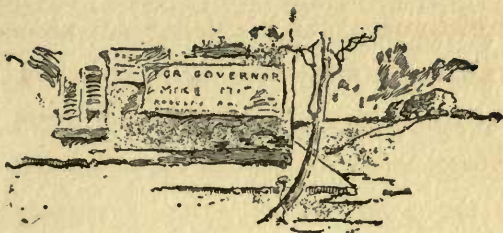
Rayle had talked to her so much about the power of money, had pictured to her the almost omnipotent influence of riches with such reckless eloquence, that the bare possibility of Breyten's turning out to be a millionaire in the disguise of a careless



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tourist awheel had a dazzling yet somewhat depressing effect upon her mind. She sat by a window and looked forth, without seeing the trees in the old garden or the robins on the grass. Curiously enough, her lover had passed out of her mind; his letters and photograph lay unnoticed in her lap.





## Chapter Twelve

General Banderet was beaten.

At the last moment his young competitor for the nomination shook a political trump card out of his sleeve with irresistible effect; the Banderet forces were surprised to such a degree that, within the time at command, they could not rearrange themselves to meet the new issue, and all was lost.

Breyten was not surprised when the rumor of General Banderet's defeat reached him; he had expected it; yet he could not guard against a stroke of unreasonable

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disappointment, and it irritated him to hear the hotel loungers making their brutal comments. Somehow Rosalynde seemed to him so closely connected with her grandfather's fate that it was as if her name and fame were being bandied by the political rabble.

What would be the effect upon her? His first impulse was to go forthwith to her with a goodly burden of cheer to lavish upon her. Certainly a bright and light-hearted girl of her character would not take a matter of this sort too seriously; and would it not be a proper thing for him to help her turn the optimistic side of the incident firmly outward?

Then suddenly his heart sank as he thought of Rayle standing in his way and forbidding every gentle and tender act. The girl's accepted lover had the exclusive right to what he, Breyten, was

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turning over in his mind as a ravishing anticipation.

He sat there scarcely aware of the gabbling crowd of excited and beery politicians; their comments no longer irritated him; he was wrestling with himself. Was not complete and unconditional abandonment of the field the imperious demand of duty? Duty! that is a cup of wormwood offered instead of the wine for which our whole being thirsts. He made a wry face at the thought. And then there was a fresh stir, with broken ejaculations and a quick grouping of the men around the desk, where messages were being received.

"Dead! General Banderet? How's that?"

"Dropped dead on the platform in the convention hall."

"The devil you say!"

# Rosalynde's Lovers

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Breyten was listening with suspended breath.

"How'd it happen?"

"Read that despatch."

Men tiptoed to look over one another's shoulders, while some person in the center of the compact group read aloud:

*"INDIANAPOLIS, 3:12 P. M. General Lucien Banderet fell in an apoplectic fit while attempting to move the unanimous endorsement of the nominee. He died before medical aid could avail. Great confusion and excitement."*

"Pore old man, he was hit hard," said a benevolent-looking fellow who wore the opposition badge. "He ortn't to a-run; he was too old."

Breyten let fall his paper and sprang to his feet. In the intensity of his feeling it was as if he saw the blow of the terrible news fall upon Rosalynde. He could not



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think; the whole tragedy, grim and dark, was refractory when he tried to consider it. One thing, however, was clear to him; it would be unbearable to see Rosalynde and not be able to try to comfort her; and besides, what right had he to go to her in her affliction? He walked to and fro with his hands clasped behind him. What was he to do? He could not retreat, he could not go forward.

In spite of himself, a sense of guilt hovered close to every thought, and from this, had he been older, he might have foretold the outcome of his moral ferment. But he was young, and youth is as obtuse and uncertain as it is agile and flexible.

Over and over he said: "It is a question of privilege." And then he leaped up, shaking his head like a young lion. "Love is free. He wins who can!" he cried. His own voice made him recoil.



### Chapter Thirteen

After the funeral of Rosalynde's grandfather it was announced in the newspapers that Dr. Roger Banderet, with his wife and daughter, had arrived from New Orleans and would spend some time at the home of his brother, the late General Lucien Banderet. The public was further informed that, by the General's will, Miss Rosalynde was made the sole successor to her grandfather's estate, and that as soon as the proper formalities of a legal settlement were over

# Rosalynde's Lovers

she would go with her relatives to live in New Orleans.

Breyten read this, and felt a sudden fear that should he delay longer Rosalynde might be gone away before he could see her, even to say good-by. But could he trust himself to say good-by? Could he say it?

The next day he was called to Indianapolis upon business which to most men would have proved very exciting. His lawyer had hastened from New York with papers for him to sign in connection with an estate suddenly falling to him from an eccentric bachelor uncle just dead.

Matters dragged; the careful and plodding lawyer insisted upon patience and orderly attention to every detail as it came up for consideration; and so September was hanging a new moon in her dusky evening's sky when Breyten once more

## Rosalynde's Lovers

reached Hawford. By this time he had settled the question as to what he would do, and he meant to do it. Rosalynde and Alfred Rayle were lovers and engaged to be married. To interfere, or try to interfere, would be wrong. His duty was clear. He would be a man, in short, and face the inevitable with a firm countenance. All he had to do was very simple; he would call upon Miss Banderet,—he sternly thought of her now as Miss Banderet,—say good-by, and be off about his pleasure. He was in such haste to carry out this simple plan of action that when he reached the hotel he could scarcely be reasonable and wait until eight o'clock, which somehow he had learned was the hour for evening calls in Hawford.

A pile of letters, accumulated during his long absence from the hotel, lay on his table, but he did not open them, or even look them over. They could wait a few

## Rosalynde's Lovers

hours longer; in the morning would be time enough.

The streets were empty when he went out; everybody had gone to the opera house to listen to a speech by the candidate for governor. In passing an alley Breyten looked up the forlorn stairway leading to Rayle's studio. The electric light from the saloon opposite shone upon the grimy ladder. It was not a pleasant moment in which to recall Rayle's position as master of fate, and unconsciously Breyten hastened his steps. When he reached the Banderet homestead there was no gleam in the windows. He stood on the threshold in the dark for a while, hearing only a screech-owl and a gentle sighing in the trees.

He listened, and a queer sense of isolation and defeat came upon him; then he



## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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banged the heavy knocker until growling echoes and clanking responses seemed to return from every room within. The house was untenanted, as the very atmosphere declared, and Breyten felt as empty as if life itself had gone from him on a visit. He crammed his hands deep into his pockets and stood scowling at the surrounding gloom. There was nothing to do but go back to the hotel and wait until he could find out whither the Banderets had flown: Then he reflected that it certainly was none of his business to be hunting on the track of people who cared nothing for him. So he strode straightway to his rooms with his head high, doughtily smiling to think how strong he was.

Among the letters on his table lay one from Rayle. He knew it as soon as he spied it, although he never before had seen the man's chirography. It may have

## Rosalynde's Lovers

been the Paris postmark that conveyed the impression, or it may have been intuitive grasp of probabilities; at all events, he tore open the envelope and unfolded the letter with no kindly feeling for the writer, not anticipating anything worth reading, and yet greedily scanning the lines. Somehow the man's name was a burden to Breyten now, the memory of him a shadow in his mind. As for the letter, it surprised him. He read it twice:

"DEAR MR. BREYTEN: *When you receive this letter I shall be in the hands of a surgeon specialist who is to make my leg straight. He's a great doctor; maybe you've heard of him, Dr. Jules de Mont-ravin. He says that I am to be a perfect physical man in a few weeks. He guarantees it. You know what this means to me, and to Rosalynde. It means more than art or fame or fortune. I am not letting*

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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*Rosalynde know that I am doing this. She would worry and imagine dire results; and, besides, I want to come home and surprise her.*

*"Now I've got to tell you more, which you will keep sacredly secret. I have abandoned art. I can't see how I ever began with it. The masters here showed me quickly that I've not the least call to painting, not even sign painting. This has made me willing to undergo the terrible ordeal of the hospital. If I come out all right I'll go at the law or medicine or ministry or real estate or anything. If I die, it's all over.*

*"To be blunt and honest with you, I must tell you that I think you are the one who gave me my chance in life. If I am wrong, you'll not care; if I am right, words are no evidence of the obligation and thankfulness I feel. Rosalynde writes*

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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*me often about you; she thinks you a wonderful man, and so do I. If I come out of this with perfect limbs I'll be a wonderful man too.*

*"I felt bound to tell you all this, which may not interest you in the least. The thought that probably you furnished the money to pay my way seemed to make it right for me to let you know what I am doing. At all events, you have my secret now, and I implicitly trust you to keep it.*

*"I was about to forget one thing, perhaps the most important, certainly the most disagreeable, of all. I am writing a lot of letters to Rosalynde, to be dated properly hereafter and sent to her during the time that I shall be under torture and unable to write or dictate or do anything but groan or lie in the stupor of drugs. These letters will tell 'er how well I am doing in my studies, and all that, to keep*

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*her happy. 'As soon as I'm over it I shall write the whole truth to her. God bless her and you. Yours sincerely,*

*"ALFRED RAYLE."*

The letter was posted on the day of General Banderet's death. Doubtless Rayle had entered hospital before the tragic news reached him, or more probably it had not reached him at all, as his doctor would almost certainly forbid anything exciting while an operation so delicate and dangerous was going on.

To Breyten the time had seemed so long that now, as he looked back to Rayle's last interview with him, he found himself wondering if it might not be that Rayle was dead. Surely some word would have come from him had the surgery been successful. But then while in hospital he could not write. he had said so in his letter, and, besides, it would be to Rosa-



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lynde that the first news would go.

There was another letter, however, lying on the table that very moment, which presently Breyten read. It was from the great Parisian specialist. It ran in substance thus :

*"Your friend, Mr. Alfred Rayle, who is under treatment with me, begs me to say to you that he is doing very well and will be perfectly cured at the end of two months from this time. He particularly wishes you to tell no one anything about his condition."*

Other surprises awaited him in the yet unopened missives on the table. A small photograph, taken from a portrait of his mother painted by a celebrated artist, fell out of an envelope along with a sheet of dainty note-paper, on which he read :

*"Somehow I must have sent the wrong picture in my other note. Won't you*

## Rosalynde's Lovers

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*please return it to me at Old Point Comfort?*                      ROSALYNDE BANDERET."

After a few moments given freely to dizzy gazing at the signature, as if it had been Rosalynde herself, he nervously fingered the remaining envelopes for "my other note" until he found it. His heart quivered, or seemed to, and a tender sense of weakness crept through him when he drew forth another little photograph. Then his eyes dilated dreamily; for there she was, Rosalynde, just as he saw her under the bridge. He almost forgot to read the accompanying note, so long was he absorbed in gazing and remembering.

*"We are leaving for Old Point Comfort. I saw in the newspapers that you were to be absent some time, so I inclose this photograph, which you told me was of your mother. You left it in a book, and I accidentally found it."*

## Rosalynde's Lovers

The date opposite Miss Banderet's signature was more than three weeks in the past, and he saw that the other note had been posted at Washington City. But the photograph, although a trifle worn, as if by much carrying about and indifferent handling, was sufficiently vivid to hold Breyten's eyes away from everything else. He looked at it and dreamed over it until far in the night. The round, frank eyes, the sweet, immature mouth, the softly oval cheeks, the lissome form, were those of a girl in her mid-teens, a girl just blooming into what Rosalynde was on the day of their meeting at the bridge.

The last thought before he went to sleep was that he would have a copy of the photograph before he sent it back. Nor did conscience seem to take cognizance of his purpose, for early next morning he went straightway and accomplished

## Rosalynde's Lovers

it without a qualm; and for fear something might go wrong with the negative, he kept the original until he had his finished copy, a remarkably good one, in hand.

By this time he was ready to write what he regarded as a well-considered and thoroughly disinterested letter to Miss Banderet. He was so fastidious about the composition, indeed, that he was more than a week doing it; but when at last it seemed just what it ought to be, he mailed it with the tiny picture carefully inclosed; nor did he find out, until too late, that, by some unaccountable slip, he had sent the copy instead of the original. Somehow the discovery touched him accurately upon the spring that loosed the jocund

## Rosalynde's Lovers

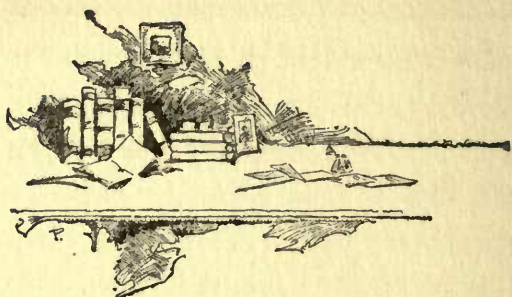
spirit so natural to him, and he laughed in his old boyish, hearty way, holding the picture before him and gazing at it as if it had said or done something extremely mirth-provoking, albeit the sweet, open look of the girl's eyes was bewitchingly serious.

"It is preposterous!" he presently thought. "It's outrageous! And what will she say? God bless her!"

He kissed the picture at least twenty times before a wave of soberness checked him, and then he thought of Rayle.







## Chapter Fourteen

Now this is what Breyten wrote:

“DEAR MISS BANDERET: *Both of your notes were on my table when I returned nearly a month after they were written. I read the second one first; then I was in a great hurry to open the other and when I did open it the inclosure surprised and delighted me. The photograph shows you exactly as you looked that day under the bridge. I see you before me while I write, your eyes gazing past me with a vast, sweet, ravishing indifference. Precisely so does this little photograph which*

# Rosalynde's Lovers

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*I so grudgingly will return to you in this letter.*

*"I am of half a mind to keep this forlorn little picture of you. Somehow I feel that possession of its original in my deepest memory has proved my right to hold fast the shadow. As I probably shall never see you again, as I probably ought never to see you again, and knowing that you are not to be troubled with what I may tell you about myself, I am going to say the whole truth. The moment that I saw you at the bridge out yonder you took a deep hold of my heart. I feel that I have loved you passionately every moment since we met. But since I found out your engagement to Mr. Rayle I have been trying to reconcile myself to the inevitable. I can not do it; I can only stand upon my honor; I can only say to myself that you are beyond my reach—*

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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*that I must not try to reach you. You love Rayle; he is a splendid fellow; he loves you; you two are engaged to be married; that is all. I am outside and must stay there. I see in the eyes of this picture that from the first you were sealed against me; you were reserved for Rayle. It is hard on me; but then what a stroke of high, sweet fortune for Rayle! I go down, he goes up. What a weight it is that bears me down, and what a lift of joy is his! I ought not to wish or even dream of shifting my burden to him.*

*"In writing all this to you I feel doubtful and uneasy about my right to do it—not my right to love you, for somehow that seems unquestionable and a thing to die by. The trouble is Rayle. The man rushed into my sympathy and regard at our first meeting. He seemed so earnest, so sincere, and so brave under great dis-*

# Rosalynde's Lovers

advantage, and it seems to me that you must have given him his courage.

*"When I returned and found that you were gone, my first impulse was to follow you, to keep you in sight, to linger near you. But what right have I, I thought, to go where she is? So I am not going to follow you; I am going as far from you as I can, not to try to forget you,—I can never do that,—but to be sure that you shall not suffer on my account.*

*"How shall I end this letter? Something drags at me and tells me that I ought to tear it up and end it so. A weight of doubt—about my right to tell you how I feel—hinders thought and confuses my language, so that I do not say just what I wish to. Yet I am somehow quite sure that your dear heart will tell you what I can not.*

*"I inclose your picture. I want to keep*

## Rosalynde's Lovers

*it, and I do not want to keep it. It is you, and it is not you. It gladdens me, and it overwhelms me with despair. I do not know what I am going to do. No need to stay here; for I hear that you are not coming back any more, and I do not expect you to answer this letter. You can not answer it. What could you say? You are happy and deserve to be happy always, and it can not matter with you if I never again find the old careless, merry life so suddenly snatched from me. But one thing I know: you will never forget*

*"FREDERICK BREYTEN."*

After this absurd letter—it seemed to Breyten to grow in absurdity as days went by—had floated down the stream of the mail going eastward, and after a whole week of unaccountable listlessness, Breyten began to expect an answer. But how could there be an answer? He had



## Rosalynde's Lovers

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had nothing to write, and he had written worse than nothing. Rosalynde would be a strange girl were she to take any notice of such an epistle. Still, there he was for more than a fortnight, lingering at Hawford, and growing excited whenever the postman arrived at the little hotel.

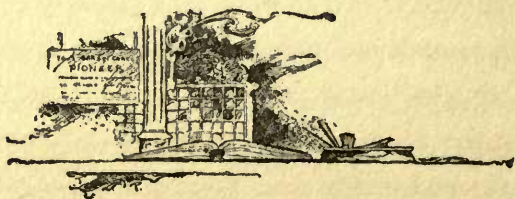
If he had known that his letter to Miss Banderet was following her from Old Point Comfort to Asheville, thence to Aiken, and on to Savannah, to Atlanta, to Lookout Mountain, and then to Birmingham, Mobile, and finally New Orleans—if he had known of that long, slow chase, he might still have waited. But how could he know? Time bore upon him like an atmosphere strangely stale. He walked out to the Banderet place and took a doleful last look at it, then went straight to New York, where two weeks later he met Rayle, who had just arrived

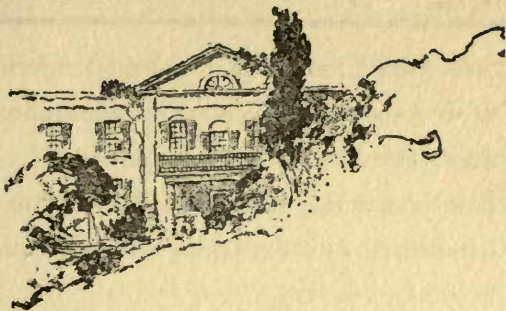
# Rosalynde's Lovers

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from Paris; and what a splendid figure he was!—straight as an arrow, admirably proportioned, and of noble presence; a dark, magnetic, powerful-looking man. The distinguished surgeon had done his work to perfection.

They met in one of the great hotels, coming face to face so suddenly that both stopped short, and, half recoiling, stood for a moment gazing. Breyten turned slightly pale, but Rayle flushed and looked glad, extending his hand presently with a hearty exclamation of greeting. Two handsomer men,—opposite and perfect types of masculine beauty,—never shook hands in the great city.





## Chapter Fifteen

At a considerable distance from Canal Street, on St. Charles, in New Orleans, the Banderet residence, a stately mansion withdrawn amid its tropical trees behind a massive brick wall, attracts the eye of every passer who has a taste for the picturesque. The heavy iron gate has a mighty lock, and through the bars there shimmers, as if drowsily, the greenery of a remarkable garden, across which a straight, broad, white walk leads to a flight of stone steps, rising to a heavy veranda, where vines flourish.

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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We must enter this guarded close if we wish to see once more Rosalynde Banderet; for this is the home of Dr. Roger Banderet, a man of great wealth, who will henceforth be Rosalynde's protector and adviser.

It is a hot day, even for New Orleans, and the afternoon drags slowly. A light breeze pants in the foliage that darkens the veranda and seems to be dying there, while in hammocks swung side by side Rosalynde and her cousin, as she calls her great-uncle's daughter Angelie, are drowsing and chatting by turns, dressed as becomes the weather and the place. Angelie has just the slightest creole lisp on her tongue, and in figure and face looks more French than Rosalynde, though resembling her in a marked degree. She is the child of her father's old age, her mother being a young creole

## Rosalynde's Lovers

woman by whom came the doctor's great wealth, the fortune of a second marriage.

Angelie was busier with her tongue than Rosalynde. Her remarks ranged from beaux to mosquitos, and were interspersed with snatches of song bewitchingly delivered. The divine magic was in her voice, as the ravishing power of beauty was in her face and form.

"I told papa it was too early to come to New Orleans," she melodiously grumbled, meantime lying almost on her back and picking at a Cuban fan, "but he heard something about the cotton market that made him deliriously anxious to see his broker. Heigho, men are such delightful idiots! Don't you just love 'em and hate 'em? Now, for example, there's Freddie Amsley; he's charming until you mention the exchange or cotton, then off he goes, crazy as can be."



## Rosalynde's Lovers

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Rosalynde knew little enough about how men gambled in the cotton game, but she had vivid memories of her grandfather's troubles with the wheat game in Chicago, his winnings and his losings, his ups and his downs,—the downs gradually but surely gaining on the ups, until there were no ups. She did not respond to Angelie's prattle, but let her mind reach out after the dear old home at Hawford.

"What is your handsome and noble bicyclist's name?" Angelie went on in her inconsequent, skipping way, referring to a previous conversation about Breyten. "I can't keep it."

"Breyten," said Rosalynde absently.

"Well, I should think he might at least write to you and tell you something romantic. And he's a poet too! I'm afraid, Rose, my sweet, that you neglected to get your charm woven over him as you ought.

## Rosalynde's Lovers

Tall, commanding, you say he is, and fair, with golden hair and honest, earnest, eloquent eyes. Ah me! Somehow no such romantic knights-errant ever come my way. Nobody but men like Freddie Amsley—young men who talk money instead of romance—are fated to cross my orbit. And this Mr. Breyten is a trifle mysterious too, you told me, I think. Couldn't you decoy him down here? I dote upon mysteries, especially when they are magnificently tall and fair and handsome, and, as you say he is, good and high-minded besides. Where is his home? He is an American, of course. Does he jump at every newspaper he sees and turn to the market quotations? Tell me more about him, Rose. Since he has my photograph, all by your fault, you ought to betray him to me in every possible way."

"Indeed, Angelie, there's nothing

## Rosalynde's Lovers

strange or mysterious or particularly romantic about Mr. Breyten," said Rosalynde. "He is handsome, strikingly handsome, with a certain distinguished air, and he is large in both body and mind, although you don't notice his height and proportions until he stands near you and you look up. Then he seems to tower above you, and he smiles down at you as if you were such a wee thing and very well worth his kind and tender attention."

"Adorable!" exclaimed Angelie; "and, of course, your sweet little provincial heart was so full of one Mr. Alfred Rayle, away in Paris, that there was no room for this young giant, who, as I well know, fell desperately in love with you. Now, honor bright, Rosalynde, didn't Mr. Frederick Breyten show strong symptoms of passionate regard for you?"

"He knew of my engagement to Al-

## Rosalynde's Lovers

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fred," said Rosalynde, as a maid came out upon the veranda with some letters on a tray, "and he was, of course, not going to be so foolish as to—oh, for me? Any for me, Lorette?"

"*Mais oui, Mam'selle,*" the maid answered, with a pretty French gesture of affirmation.

And it was thus that Breyten's persevering epistle finally reached its goal, after as crooked a course and as many delays as ever hindered a flight. Rosalynde looked curiously at the much-erased and often-renewed superscription, and the numerous postmarks on the envelope. Two letters from Rayle had to wait: There was a flash of carmine in her cheeks, deepening as she broke the seal.

"Here's your picture, Angie," she said, unable to hide a breathless eagerness, and holding the photograph out at arm's

## Rosalynde's Lovers

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length, without looking from the letter.

"Oh, it *is* from your delightful friend, eh? Fortunate girl!" Angelie took the photograph, but did not look at it. "But you read his letter before you open the two from your accepted lover! Ah, my dearest, there's romance in all this. And what a letter! A whole volume,—and how excited you look! It must be ravishing."

Rosalynde flung herself out of the hammock, and, speaking not a word, went to her room.

"And now really what?" said Angelie, sitting up and gazing inquiringly after her cousin. But she was left alone and without explanation. "The child loves him, adores him, that's evident." Then she looked at the photograph in her hand. On the card was printed: "Morrisons, Photographers, Hawford, Indiana."



## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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Quick as a flash she understood, and was laughing almost hysterically when Mr. Freddie Amsley was announced.

"Say that I'm not in, Lorette,—but yes," she slipped lazily from the hammock to a willow chair, "tell him to come out here. No I'll not—"

She was stopped by the appearance of Mr. Freddie Amsley himself, laughing and apologizing.

"I know that you are not in," he said, "but, hearing you so hilariously engaged out here, I stepped around. Now don't scold me; be gentle, for I'm not happy."

He was a slender, alert-looking young man with blue eyes, a high, hawk-nose, blond side-whiskers, and short-cropped pale hair, which was parted in the middle. He looked at Angelie with a shrewd, speculative gaze.

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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"I cannot confine my scolding to you," said Angelie, looking at the photograph; "I must include all men. Think of it! one who had my picture has been impudent enough to return it."

"Give me his name and I'll call him out," said Amsley. "He ought, by all the rules of compassion, to have sent it to me. Who is he?"

"Not for the world would I tell you; I cannot let you be killed yet a while. Who would take your place as—"

"As hopeless adorer," he interrupted a trifle bitterly, despite his ready laugh, "and faithful friend." Then with sudden passion he added: "You can't doubt my love, Angelie, and you can't despise it. It is too faithful, too true."

Angelie held up the photograph, regarding it reflectively.

"It was a curious little mistake and a

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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ludicrous counter-mistake," she inconsequently remarked. "My photograph went to him by accident, and by accident, evidently, he has returned a copy of it."

Amsley bit his lip; but he had the gambler's nerve, and when Angelie looked at him his face was not in the least a mirror of his inward feelings. She had held him off so long that, hard as it was to bear, he was becoming used to it. She was not a coquette, but she liked Amsley without loving him. He had been good to her, and she did not credit his passion; she thought she could see to the bottom of it. At the end of a meaningless and, to him, exasperating conversation, she sent him away, as usual, bewildered and dissatisfied, but not hopeless. He had a sense of humor, and he laughed and swore by turns as he walked down the street. He was thinking what a fool he was—a very

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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superior fool, to be sure ; and it occurred to him that he must either let go all hope of Angelie or hit upon some plan of bringing her speedily to terms. Then he laughed at the thought, for Angelie Banderet never accepted terms, she dictated them.





## Chapter Sixteen

Breyten and Rayle dined together in New York without comforting each other to any great depth, and separated upon perfunctory conditions, not expecting or especially desiring to meet again. Rayle made a feeble effort to force Breyten into discussing the subject of the money he had so mysteriously received, a large part of which he had brought back with him from Paris; but Breyten so cleverly baffled him that he almost concluded to abandon his suspicion in that regard. Moreover, having discovered by chance that Breyten's



## Rosalynde's Lovers

wealth was practically limitless, he naturally began to relax his anxiety in the matter, and was willing enough to let the discussion pass.

Rayle had many inquiries to make about Rosalynde, all of which Breyten answered unsatisfactorily, but yet fully enough in a way. He seemed not interested, Rayle thought, and could not readily understand just what was expected of him in response to a direct question. It seemed plain that he had not been particularly impressed by Miss Banderet's charms, and this gratified Rayle while it piqued him:

At the end of an hour both men felt the need of solitude, or at least of escape from each other. Rayle had managed to find out that Rosalynde was absent from Hawford when Breyten left there, and that she

## Rosalynde's Lovers

was at Old Point Comfort the last he heard of her.

"She may have returned to Hawford by this time; probably has," said Breyten.

This was bordering upon indirect prevarication, albeit he really did not mean it so.

"She wouldn't stay away long, I should think," Rayle assented reflectively. "Anyway, I think I shall go to Hawford first, and if she's not there I'll go where she is."

He had been saying something about his great desire to surprise Rosalynde with the remarkable change in his physique. The surgeon, he remarked, had found his deformity a mere trifle, not in the least difficult to remove.

Breyten was mightily relieved when the moment for separation came and Rayle announced that he had barely time to

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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reach his train. They shook hands, said some insincere things meant to be cordially friendly, shook hands again, and then turned their backs upon each other, Rayle's brain luminous with anticipations, Breyten's heart wedged in his throat.

Breyten sat in his room at the Waldorf, a man quite out of employment and unable to determine what his next step was to be. Millions of dollars at his command, the whole world before him, opportunities unlimited, youth, health, manly beauty, everything his save the one thing he desired, and that one thing more to him than everything else in the universe. He jumped to his feet and shook his fist at the wall in sheer rage when he thought how wonderfully handsome Rayle was.

## Rosalynde's Lovers

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“And to think I made him over, remodeled him, completed him, all for this!”

Of course, such a storm soon blew over and left him somewhat relaxed and ashamed. It was not in his nature to be sour or to harbor the devil long; but now he found himself, even when the calm had fallen upon him, trying to make room for certain questionable considerations. Far down in some dim corner of his soul cowered the shadowy, albeit quite distinguishable, consciousness of his intention to go back to Rosalynde, despite Rayle and despite everything. He knew that his resistance was a sham, therefore he made it with all his might and with a stubbornness not in the least natural.

Indeed, the thing might have gone on a long while had not a little letter, a mere note, come to him from Rosalynde in reply to his almost forgotten epistle. Noth-

## Rosalynde's Lovers

ing could have surprised him more exquisitely or more deeply. It was like a flash out of highest heaven.

He sat with the little sheet of delicate scribbling held firmly before him, and read it over and over, trying, and at certain moments almost succeeding, to draw from it just the least hint of something comforting.

“NEW ORLEANS, LA.

“DEAR MR. BREYTEN: *It was good of you to return the picture so promptly. It was not mine. That was my reason for desiring its return at once. Your letter reached me here at my uncle's, where I am to spend the winter. I hope that this will not be delayed by numerous remailings, as yours was.*

“Sincerely,

“ROSALYNDE BANDERET.”

Of course, Breyten could not feel or



## Rosalynde's Lovers

even suspect the worry of spirit that the writing of this letter had brought to Rosalynde. It might have been a sort of comfort to him could he have known how she actually cried and lost a whole night's sleep, trying to invent some form of composition by which she could write freely to him, as a sister to a brother, and yet save herself from every chance of misconstruction by him and from her own conscience as well. She wrote a half-score of letters, some of them long, chatty, and bright, others somewhat sympathetic and full of wholesome suggestions, while a number seemed to her, upon reading them over, quite scattering in their nature and almost without connected meaning. Why she finally preferred and sent the one we have just read she probably never could have explained. When it was gone she would have given almost anything to withdraw it.

## Rosalynde's Lovers

Breyten actually at length succeeded in discovering in certain phrases of the letter what he thought meant a great deal. "She as good as says," he explained to himself, "that if the picture had belonged to her she would have let me keep it. And then why should she particularly state that she is to be in New Orleans all winter, if she did not want me to come? Moreover, the hope that her letter would not be delayed shows that she will expect to hear from me or see me again."

He slept over it one long night, a broken, unrestful sleep, and next morning took the train for New Orleans.

In the meantime Rayle had reached Hawford only to find that Rosalynde would probably not return to the old home at all, and off he flew to Old Point Comfort, where with some difficulty he found out whither the Banderets had gone from

## Rosalynde's Lovers

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there. He followed from place to place, on and on, misled here, delayed yonder, as Breyten's letter had been, his impatience increasing in proportion to the square of every distance traveled, with the added increment of wasted days, delayed trains, and wrong directions taken from careless hotel clerks: And so it happened that he finally reached New Orleans in a dusty and forlorn state, but glowing with the enthusiasm of the chase.





## Chapter Seventeen

Early next morning Rayle was awake and thinking of Rosalynde. He had no mind to delay, and at the earliest permissible moment for a call he went to Dr. Banderet's mansion and asked to see Miss Banderet. The servant admitted him and went away with his card, while he stood in the twilight gloom of the ample drawing-room with black crow-foot furniture carelessly ranged around, and dusky pictures peering at him from the walls. It made him think of art and his abandoned ambi-



## Rosalynde's Lovers

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tion, and then he wondered what Rosalynde would say to the course he had pursued. And what would she think of the wonderful betterment of his personal appearance?

After all, the straightening of his leg had not made him strong enough to stand firmly, for he was trembling violently from head to foot. Then he heard a light, quick step approaching the door. There was a magic in the delicate pat-pat-pat upon the deep-piled carpet. His heart gave a leap; a warm glow ran along his veins. In that second he forgot the false note lately sounded in the song of his life. For, lightly tripping through the doorway, came a tall, lissome form, the radiant face smiling out of the twilight gloom of the place. He sprang to her and caught her firmly in his arms.

"Rosalynde! Rosalynde!" he cried in



## Rosalynde's Lovers

a voice softly vibrant with intense feeling.

He kissed her many times before she could find breath to say—

“Please don’t—I’m not Rosalynde—let me go sir, will you!”

It was Angelie; but he could not understand; he thought Rosalynde was but playing and pretending; so he kissed her again and again, holding her fast. He was too much borne away on the moment’s impulse to notice the French timbre in her voice, nor did he stop to reflect that Rosalynde could not possibly fight so atrociously and cruelly.

“This is outrageous, sir!” she said, her voice quivering. “Leave the house this minute!” She stamped her foot with energy, and pointed towards the door with her gleaming hand.

Rayle’s head swam, but he made a great effort to understand the situation.

## Rosalynde's Lovers

There may have been a vague impression in his mind that he had made some sort of ugly mistake.

"Rosalynde," he said, "what—what—"

"Oh, but no, I am not Rosalynde," Angelie interrupted. "You know that I am not. Can't you see? I am Angelie, Rosalynde's cousin. You are Mr. Rayle, and you've made yourself ridiculous; but I forgive you. A man never fails to be disagreeable just when he means to be entertaining."

She laughed again when he took her hand and bent a mystified pair of dark eyes upon her.

"You came to see Rosalynde, but she is away with my father on Bayou Teche. I understand it all now. It was rather sudden, however, and quite unexpected." She was speaking rapidly and with a charming air of reconciliation. "If you

## Rosalynde's Lovers

are sure that you have yourself well under control," she added, "you may sit down. Rosalynde has told me about you. She will return next week."

Rayle began to look stupidly enlightened, and was smiling rather drily.

"When did you arrive in New Orleans?" said Angelie.

"Yesterday evening."

"Why didn't you let Rosalynde know that you were coming? She went away this morning, not more than an hour ago. It's too bad."

"Where did you say she is gone?"

"Oh, it's indefinite. Father took her with him into the Teche country. He has a roving business trip of some sort."

"I couldn't overtake them, then?"

"Most likely not," she said, and something in her voice searched his heart; it was like a haunting bird-note in dreamy

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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weather. "It would be a tiresome and hopeless chase."

"It will be tiresome to wait," he said.

"You have waited many months; you can wait a week longer."

He looked at her sitting there by the open window, while the light through flickering orange foliage played upon her sweet face and softly rounded form, and something in him stirred tenderly, sending along his veins a glow of delight.

When he arose to go, Angelie's eyes measured his handsome figure; then, with a pretty, reminiscent start, she suddenly said:

"But Rosalynde said that you were lame. You are not, are you?"

"I was, but I am not," he said, looking at himself. "My trouble was as nothing in the hands of a good surgeon."

"How delightful!" she exclaimed, with

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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her hands clasped before her. "I am glad for you."

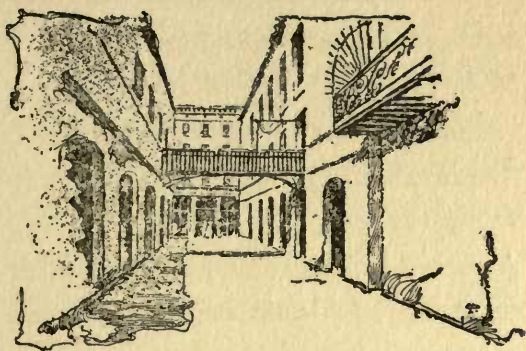
"You will come every day," she added. "It may shorten your period of waiting if I prattle to you."

He was moving towards the door when the strains of a violin exquisitely played came from a remote part of the house, and he involuntarily paused.

"It is mamma," Angelie said, coming near him. "She is a wonderful artiste: nobody can play as she does. When you come again she shall play for you. Why not this evening? You'll be lonely. Will you?"

Rayle said that he would, and as he walked back to the hotel, somehow he felt that lately the tune of his life had been breaking upon false notes.





## Chapter Eighteen

In the morning following his arrival Breyten picked up a morning paper, yet damp from the press, and almost the first paragraph was quite in the line of his thoughts. It stated that Dr. Banderet, accompanied by his niece, Miss Rosalynde, of Indiana, had gone to Bayou Teche for a week. A week! A year would not have been more unsatisfactory. He read the paragraph over two or three times, then crumpled the paper, flung it on a table, and went to the clerk's desk to in-

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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quire how he could go to Bayou Teche by the shortest and quickest route.

He would have but two hours and ten minutes to wait for a train, a fast flyer, going to "the Teche," as the clerk called it. He would reach New Iberia, a quaint old town in that region, sometime in the afternoon. The Teche was a long bayou with plenty of steamboats on it. Many tourists flocked there and had no end of a good time, the clerk volunteered to explain.

Breyten broke off from him to look for a railway guide and snatch a hasty breakfast. The excitement of pursuit was already tingling through him. He made his few necessary preparations with nervous haste, his fine face all aglow. He looked like a big boy making frantic efforts to get ready for a holiday, and he

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was at the station half an hour before time for the train to leave.

An excursion to Texas, in the interests of an agricultural emigration company, had attracted a rather motley throng, in the midst of which Breyten stalked about restlessly until his train drew up; then, after being jostled and delayed at the door, he went into the rearmost parlor-car. The first face he saw struck him with such surprise that he came near crying out.

Rosalynde was looking out of a window, and did not see Breyten as he passed, though he hesitated a moment by the arm of her seat. Dr. Banderet, coming up just then, politely elbowed him away and sat down beside his grand-niece, with a gold-headed cane between his knees.

Breyten's seat was some distance farther back. He flung himself into it with

## *Rosalynde's Lovers*

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the limp look of a very tired man. He could not see Rosalynde's face, but a curve of her cheek showed under her simple traveling-hat, and the dusky gleam of her hair was just as it used to be when she sat reading to him in the old home in Hawford.

The train soon freed itself from the hindrances of the city and leaped forth into the strange moss-hung forests and over the plashy swamps and marshes.

After a while Dr. Banderet went to the smoking-apartment, leaving Rosalynde alone in her seat. Breyten gave himself no time for a change of purpose, but rather precipitately carried it out. Rosalynde looked up and saw him bending over her. She started; her face flushed, then turned pale. She had been thinking of him when his voice startled her. He

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was speaking when she lifted her eyes to him.

"Rosalynde," he said, with a fine, attractive smile, "didn't you know that you couldn't get away from me? Here I am."

"You surprised me," she said, making room for him by removing Dr. Banderet's cane from where he had left it leaning against the seat beside her; "but I am glad to see you. Where are you going?"

"Wherever you go," he answered gravely. "You shall never get out of my sight again if I can prevent it—never. Rosalynde, it's useless to hesitate or deny. I love you and you love me; you know it and I know it, and no power can change it or hinder it."

"Don't, please," she said at first in a frightened half-whisper. Then with a great effort she laughed and added: "But



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tell me where you've been and what you've seen."

"I've been nowhere, have seen nothing, and have thought only of you all the time."

"But a person who goes nowhere and sees nothing must be very stupid and uninteresting," she said, with a poor little breaking voice, which she was trying to make ring out freely and lightly in proof of a jocund mood.

"It's no use, Rosalynde," he said; "you feel it and might as well acknowledge it: Love is master."

Suddenly she bridled breathlessly. "You shall not say this to me," she exclaimed. "I will not listen. You forget; you—"

Dr. Banderet appeared to claim his seat, or rather to stand mute with a bland interrogative expression on his aristocratic face. Rosalynde did the first thing

## Rosalynde's Lovers

she thought of, the moment being a crucial one. She introduced Frederick Breyten to her great-uncle. Breyten arose, and the two men, bobbing and staggering to the car's motion, shook hands.

"Keep the seat, sir, keep the seat," Dr. Banderet insisted. "I will sit facing you, here. I like riding backward for a change."

The arrangement comforted Rosalynde, and she enjoyed hearing Breyten, in answer to inquiries from her uncle, tell a good deal about the Breytens of Virginia, an historic family well known to Dr. Banderet.

Dr. Banderet was a voluble talker, with much that was interesting to talk about, and he gave Breyten little opportunity to speak to Rosalynde.

"I am very glad that you have no definite plan for seeing the Teche region,"

## Rosalynde's Lovers

he went on to say. "I shall claim the pleasure of showing it to you. You will go with us? I have a little business, but my niece and you will doubtless be able to entertain each other, being old friends."

Breyten was delighted, but Rosalynde looked frightened and seemed on the point of raising strenuous objection, although, in fact, her tongue was refractory; she could not have spoken a word had life depended upon it.

The train swept on, and as the miles slipped behind, it seemed to Rosalynde that she was leaving forever all that had once been life to her and flying into some unknown region enmisted with doubt and haunted by a formless, tender dread.



## Chapter Nineteen

It would be interesting to observe Rayle's proceedings during the time—it turned out to be twelve days instead of a week—that Dr. Banderet and Rosalynde were absent.

He called upon Angelie every day, and found her a most bewitching young woman, who held up before him a kaleidoscope of dazzling fascinations.

He recognized her extreme difference from Rosalynde at the very moments when he was most impressed with the twin-like resemblance between them. Per-

## Rosalynde's Lovers

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haps this confused him, or was it the weather? For never had his eyes looked through such soft splendor of sunlight by day and moonlight by night.

Here our record must rely upon the meager facts in the following letter written by Angelie to Rosalynde, who received it at New Iberia after her return there from a memorable voyage on the beautiful waters of Bayou Teche:

*"DEAREST ROSE: I hope this letter will not fail to reach you; and oh, I'm so glad that I did not feel in the humor to go with you and papa, for I've been having such exciting experiences. How shall I tell you? It's like a novel. The very handsomest and most interesting young man that I ever saw has been coming to see me every day since your departure. He's dark and has features so nobly cut and so finely intelligent that it's a delight*



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*to look at him. He's a charming talker too; has just returned from Paris, where he had no end of adventures. But, dear, he has no more actual knowledge of the world than a boy of fifteen, though his opinion of himself is pretty extensive, as is the case with all men, you know. Still, that makes him delightful,—his want of worldly wisdom, I mean,—and he is so entertaining and so western; he's from Indiana too! He knew Uncle Lucien, and is acquainted with Mr. Frederick Breyten! I really think there is something mysterious about his coming here, something romantic rather, and I am so interested. He has great, big, dark, soft eyes,—a poet's eyes,—and such a voice! He sings to mamma's accompaniments with perfectly divine richness and power, in a heavy tenor that I never heard the equal*

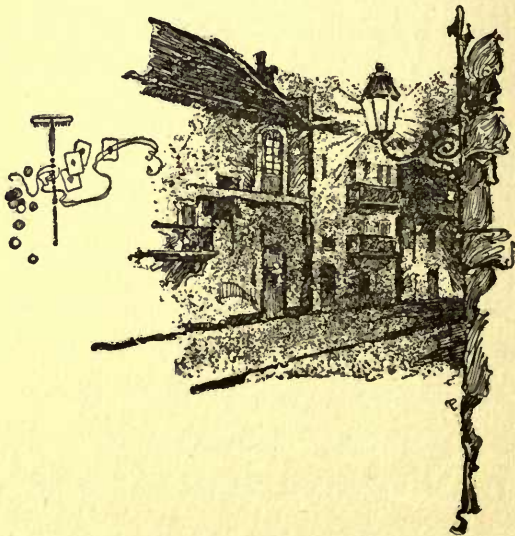
# Rosalynde's Lovers

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of anywhere. Freddie has called so I must close.

*"A thousand kisses from your devoted  
cousin*

*'ANGELIE.'"*





## Chapter Twenty

Bayou Teche doubtless has had many a romance upon its slow, languid water, and in the picturesque houses that peep forth from the groves and gardens along its banks, but the flower of them all—the poem of them all, it would be better to say—was that which Breyten and Rosalynde made for themselves while on board a little steamboat, a lazy but tireless craft running far up the great lagoon and touching with its enterprising nose every landing on either shore.

Dr. Banderet, having lived most of his

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life in the South, had the Southerner's quick sense of what is due to a gentleman who falls in the way of one's hospitality or seems a good target for one's generosities of any sort. He knew Breyten's family, had known his father, and now, well impressed with the young man himself, he set no limit to kindness and courtesy. His business at New Iberia had to be postponed for a few days, and as time was heavy he bethought him of the voyage up the Teche—it would be a revelation to Rosalynde, and perhaps not unattractive to Breyten. So it was arranged; a little steamer came just at the nick of time; to reach it was no great trouble.

The old doctor was in high spirits; Breyten had charmed him; for Breyten was a good listener, the doctor an enthusiastic *raconteur*, and what more was needed?

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The only drawback was that Breyten's mind wandered from the entertainment so generously expended upon him to Rosalynde, sitting by the vessel's rail a little distance farther forward. He wanted to join her; as yet he had not been able to converse with her alone, and his heart was impatient, his ears longed for her voice, his eyes could not be kept from gazing at her profile while she looked away over the smooth water.

Breyten, after the most diligent impatience, finally worked himself clear of Dr. Banderet's control, and turned his chair so as to face Rosalynde.

"Now," he said, with the air of one who dares fate, "we will give any intruder a cold stare of repulse. I am in no humor for interruptions."

"It is a beautiful panorama," she said, "a sort of dream-shadow and dream-sheen



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vision. I was here once before, long, long ago, when I was a little child. It is just the same, so far as I can see, not a trace of change. I remember those long-necked, slow-winged birds." She pointed towards some herons, laboring through the drowsy air. "I have dreamed of these dusky shore-groves and those wide fields of cane yonder hundreds of times. They made a great impression upon my childish mind, and I have always desired to come and see them again."

"But you never dreamed that I was to be with you, did you?"

"No," she said with a little laugh.

"Well, I was to be, and here I am. You do not seem surprised; you do not object."

"I don't know," she faltered; then added with a firmer tone: "People have to meet. The highways are for all."

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"True; but our meeting opened a new life to both of us; you know it. Look back beyond that meeting. Is life back there what it is on this side? We have blended souls, we have enlarged each other's vision, broadened each other's capacity to enjoy, to comprehend, to aspire. I did not know life until you opened its gate; before that I was but a joy-dreamer, with the Greek poets for my cup-fillers and physical nature for my guide. Now I feel something better, purer, stronger. I love, and I feel the imperious right to be loved."

Rosalynde had been struggling with a sense of duty during this impassioned speech, which she felt overwhelming her and lifting tears towards her eyes. The facts—she could not deny that they were facts—tumbled upon

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her attention by Breyten just now were not new to her; she had revolved them innumerable times since they parted at Hawford. Not that she gave them the meaning that he insisted upon. She gave them no meaning; they simply haunted her with a strange composite effect at once infinitely saddening and indescribably sweet.

"What are you thinking?" Breyten gently demanded, after a rather long pause, during which a beautiful landscape had opened on one bank of the bayou.

"I am Alfred Rayle's promised wife," she said. "There is nothing to add to the simple statement. You know it as well as I."

In that moment, at those words, his heart sank, but he fought hard and held his head high. Defeat seemed impossible. He must not force fate; time and the

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weight of events might yet win for him all that now seemed impossible, for there was no doubting the immovable, albeit hauntingly gentle and inscrutable, expression in her face.

"If you really love Alfred Rayle and do not love me, that is the end," he said. "I followed you here not to try to change your love, but to prove it. My love for you could not let me believe that you did not love me. I can not realize it now; but if it is so, if you love Rayle and not me, it is my load, and I must carry it. I see that I have done wrong. Forgive me; lay it to my ignorance. I never loved before; it has conquered me wholly."

He passed his hand over his forehead and looked bewildered. But he mastered himself before Rosalynde could fairly understand, and now he had to assume a cheerful mood, for Dr. Banderet came

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to join them and had thought of another excellent story.

The voyage on the Teche lasted two days without further incident worth recording. Rosalynde and Breyten conversed brokenly, meeting and separating capriciously; Dr. Banderet gradually completed his cycle of stories and cheerfully set out on the second round. At last it was all over, and the little party again set foot in the hotel at New Iberia. Next morning Dr. Banderet's business claimed him, and Rosalynde was whisked away by a matronly friend, whose home on the outskirts of the town looked old enough and quaint enough to date back to the days of French supremacy.

Breyten lingered and waited. Why did he linger? What was he waiting for? There was no reason; there was no expect-



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tation. Still, he lingered and waited, a mere loungee at the hotel.

When Dr. Banderet's affairs were at last arranged to his liking, he brought Rosalynde back to the hotel, and the three dined together upon delicious French dishes and notably excellent French wines. Of course, some stories by the doctor added pleasantness to the occasion. Finally he looked at his watch and suddenly realized that they would have to make haste or lose the train.

"Good-by, then," said Breyten, offering Rosalynde his hand. "I am going on to Mexico. Our voyage was an experience that I shall never forget. I say good-by with a pang."

She gave him her hand.

"Why, my dear sir," exclaimed Dr. Banderet,—“my dear sir, this is sudden;

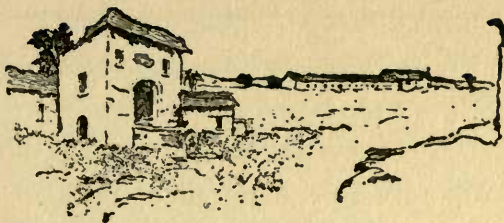
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we had counted upon your returning with us."

"Yes, it is rather sudden, a sort of surprise to myself; but I am a creature of whims. I have thought of Mexico for a long while, and now that I seem near its border, the impulse comes upon me to go. But you will miss your train through being kind to me. Good-by, Miss Banderet; good-by, doctor."

"You won't be always in Mexico," said Dr. Banderet, already hurrying Rosalynde away, and speaking cordially back over his shoulder. "You'll be in New Orleans on your return trip. Come right to my house."

When Rosalynde turned at the door and gave Breyten a quick glance, he thought he saw tears shining in her eyes.



## Chapter Twenty One

Breyten went to Mexico and wandered somewhat perfunctorily for a space of five or six months in a mood not conducive to perfect comfort.

He kept Angelie's photograph,—he could not separate it from his dream of Rosalynde,—and one seeing him gazing upon it would have suspected him of praying to it; but sentimental as all this may seem, he lost no sleep, kept a great appetite, flourished physically, and read the home newspapers whenever he could get hold of them.

He was on the point of embarking at Vera Cruz for Havre when the item of

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news for which he seemed to have been long looking fell under his eyes. It was in a New Orleans Sunday paper, just five weeks old:

"Mr. Alfred Rayle and his wife have gone to Hawford, Indiana, for a month's visit."

Breyten read the item over and over, but somehow he could not realize its fact. Presently he flung down the paper with an impatient gesture, and laughed as one does who is proof against the little annoyances that printed matter occasionally swarms with.

"I've looked for it diligently enough, expected it confidently enough, and prepared myself for it carefully enough," he reflected, "so that it means nothing—absolutely nothing—to me, now that I've found it."

Breyten went bowling across the seas to France. There he made persistent efforts to regain his lost way of life.

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First he tried interesting himself in books, art, the theaters, and the streets of Paris; then he ran up to Switzerland and gave his muscles free play among the glaciers. It was but mechanical exercise, not recreation; the old idyllic joy would not return. He began to wonder how he had ever cared so much for what now seemed idle and empty, a mere vagrant's mood, of which a man ought to be ashamed. But what was worth while, then?

He lingered here and yonder on his slow way. He spent the winter in the Riviera, dreaming of the Teche, knowing all the time that sooner or later he was going back to Hawford on a bicycle by way of the bridge where he had first met Rosalynde. And promptly, early in May, he was there, but the old wooden span had been torn away to give place to a patent one of iron.

It was growing dusk when he reached the hotel at Hawford.



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"Hello!" said the smiling fat clerk, instantly recognizing him, "glad to see you, Mr. Breyten. You can have the same rooms. You are looking fine. Been growing, haven't you?"

Breyten generalized vaguely and genially in response to this unexpected warmth. He would have liked to ask innumerable questions, all tending to one object—Rosalynde. For, in spite of what he knew to the contrary, he could think of her only as living yonder in the old gray home among the trees. Presently he would go up there and see her; she would be walking in the broad way between the gate and the house, and an absurd little dog with a ribbon around its neck would be trotting along ahead of her.

"When you got jammed up so on your bicycle that time, I never expected that I'd see you flying around again. You're entirely well of it?"

"Yes, thank you, quite well."

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"The young lady came out mighty lucky."

"And how is she?" Breyten could not control his desire. The question was asked automatically.

"Don't know; well, I guess. The family have just come up from New Orleans; going to spend the summer here. I haven't seen any of 'em yet."

Breyten turned abruptly and followed the servant, who led the way to his room. He walked briskly and appeared to be alert, self-contented, happy; but he felt heavy and listless; he could not think clearly, and every fiber of his body seemed strained to the point of lesion.

He dined heartily, for his heavy exercise awheel had given him a sharp appetite, though he was not tired. At eight of the Hawford Court House steeple clock he went out into the moonlight night.

He reflected: "I shall go for a look at the house where I lay so long. And it

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seems but yesterday, yet like a century too, since she read to me and I gazed at her through half-closed eyes. Just a look at the old house, and then—”

In front of the Banderet homestead Breyten stood up firmly, straight and tall, while a figure moved down the walk towards him; a gray, slender, graceful form, leading a little child.

One glance assured him; it was Rosalynde. Suddenly he felt perfectly master of himself. There was but one thing to do, and he was glad and eager to do it. Of course, he had no time to reason it out with himself, but the gist of it was: “Here she comes. It is Mrs. Rayle now, a happy little wife. Clearly all that I’ve got to do is to shake hands with her, be glad to see her, be invited in, talk with Rayle, and go away.”

When Breyten opened the gate the figure was less than ten paces distant, and at the click of the latch it stopped quite still.

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With quick steps he approached and held out his hand.

"Do you forgive a friend, Mrs. Rayle, the liberty of taking you unawares?" His voice was not so steady, after all.

"Mr. Breyten!"

"Mrs. Rayle."

"You are mistaken. Mrs. Rayle is away; but I am glad to see you."

She took his hand: he stood looking hard at her. Surely it was Rosalynde, pale, radiant, glad, gazing up into his questioning eyes.

The little child, daughter of a neighbor, slipped aside and ran away.

Breyten put on a great spurt of shrewdness; the flash of comprehensive retrospect that comes to a drowning man was giving him full explanation of his mistake. He recollected that the photograph was of Rosalynde's cousin, Miss Angelie Banderet. To be sure.

He laughed and said:

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"The moonlight deceived me ; I thought you were Rosalynde—Mrs. Rayle."

"Come into the house with me, where the light is better," she said.

"You are Miss Angelie Banderet?"

"No, I am Rosalynde."

He stopped as if frozen.

"Then—then," he stammered, "then you are Mrs. Rayle."

"No. I am Rosalynde Banderet." There was a decided accent of disapproval, as well as denial, in her voice. "I do not like the humor of what you say." She made a gesture of disappointment, and stood as if waiting for him to make amends.

"Rosalynde—Rosalynde—what are you saying to me? What do you mean?"

Something behind his faltering words indicated whole volumes of inexpressible suspense, doubt, hope, trembling expectation.

"I do not understand you," she said,



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visibly quivering from head to foot, for she was beginning to suspect the truth. He did not comprehend that it was Angelie who became Mrs. Rayle.

As for him, he caught the truth at that moment, as if it had been revealed by a divine light. He saw a flash of electrical splendor, like that away back yonder under the old bridge on the day he first saw her.

"You did not marry Rayle," he cried in a low, glad voice. "Rosalynde! Rosalynde! You did not—did you?"

"No," she said, from somewhere deep in his arms. It was like the cry of a bird reveling in foliage so densely rich that the luxury was well-nigh overpowering.

"No," he repeated after her; "no, no!"

The spring wind was merry in the young leaves overhead. From the house a violin's notes trembled forth, deliciously tender and sweet; it was Mrs. Banderet playing the doctor's favorite lyric. Then

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a small object came ambling down the walk and frisked and barked as if its whole life depended upon noise and motion; but it received not the slightest regard; its mistress did not even see it or hear it.

We can go no further. Marriage is not the end of love, but it is the true end of a love-story; and this is only a love-story.





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